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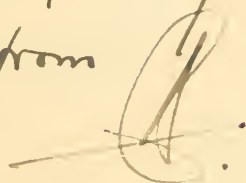
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A handwritten signature, possibly reading "C. S.", written in dark ink. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop for the first letter and a smaller, more compact second letter.

25. ix. 13.

DENYS OF AUXERRE

First Published 1912

DENYS OF AUXERRE

A Drama

BY

JAMES BARTON



LONDON

CHRISTOPHERS

LANCASTER PLACE, STRAND, W.C.

ISAAC FOOT
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TO
MY WIFE

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

THE story of Denys l'Auxerrois as told by Walter Pater in his *Imaginary Portraits* forms the foundation of this play. Denys, the central figure, though of obscure origin, had come by reason of his beauty and personal charm to represent in the popular imagination the genius of a new age, of which the accepted emblem was a Roman wine-flask found enclosed in an ancient coffin of stone. From this delicate bit of green glass there seemed to flow fresh and vitalizing influences, like that old-world *joie-de-vivre* of which scattered echoes linger faintly in classic song. There followed, too, seasons of exceptional mildness and unexampled plenty ; in the arts a wonderful power and inventive-ness ; in the common relations of life great gladness and good fellowship. The actors in the first scene of the drama come fresh from a masque of Bacchus and Ariadne, in which the principal parts had been taken by Denys, No-man's son, and Ariane, daughter of the Lord of Auxerre. The play relates the sequel and must be left to explain itself.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE LORD OF AUXERRE.
 THE BISHOP OF AUXERRE.
 PHILIP, *Count of Chastellux*.
 PERUSE } *noblemen*.
 ORME }
 DENYS L'AUXERROIS.
 HERMES, *a monk*.
 WALTER BASKERVILLE.
 JARNAC, *captain of men-at-arms*.
 RALPH, *one of his men*.
 MAYOR.
 MAYORESS.
 OLD MAN, *father of Doris*.
 CLEOPHAS, *a sculptor*.
 A VINEDRESSER.
 A PAINTER.
 A MASON.
 A TAPISER.
 A COUNTRYMAN.
 A LEPER.
 ARIANE, *daughter of Auxerre*.
 DORIS }
 PETRONILLA } *Market girls*.
 IMOGEN }
 FRANCES }
 BLANCHE }
 NEPHTHYS }
 BUDDHA } *Dream-shapes*
 MAHOMET } *of the*
 ADAM } *Underworld*.
 JOB }

Citizens, countrymen, canons, masons and other workmen, men-at-arms, artists and craftsmen.

SCENE . . . AUXERRE.
 TIME . . . 13TH CENTURY.

DENYS OF AUXERRE

ACT I

SCENE I

The market-place by the banks of the Yonne with the Cathedral in the background. Enter with other revellers, garlanded and wearing long robes, as from a masque of Bacchus, BLANCHE, IMOGEN, PETRONILLA and FRANCES. Citizens and countrymen in holiday attire throng the square.

SEVERAL OF THE CROWD. Denys ! What, Denys !

A COUNTRYMAN. Tally-ho !

All the way to Jericho !

A CITIZEN. Stir about ! Some climb the trees,

Through the wynds and alleys scatter.

BLANCHE. Ask the birds and ask the bees.

IMOGEN. At the fountain ask the satyr.

FRANCES. Babble brook and magpie chatter.

PETRONILLA. Shepherds, pipe it to your flocks—

BLANCHE. Naiads, whisper to the water,

Combing out your long wet locks—

ALL. Denys kissed the county's daughter.

They go off in different directions calling for DENYS.

Enter PHILIP, booted and spurred, and PERUSE following him, dressed after the Greek manner with a leopard's skin and ivy wreath.

PHILIP. God, the supporter of a princeling's shield,
Pander to Bacchus ! All the fat shop-dames
With breasts like dumplings cater for thy kisses.
Oh, what a pudding-jack art thou to turn
And spin about for Moll that wipes the dish !

PERUSE. By Jove ! but they were comely, sweet and
kind ;

One took my hand, and through the dance we ran
To the quick drum-beats—

PHIL. Let me hear them roll
With crash of brass and steeds that neigh for war.

PER. She blushed no deeper than the faint dog-rose,
So maidenly, so delicate her cheek.

But at her bosom there was pinned a flower
Cupid had dipped in the dark wine of love,
And still the perfume ravishes my soul.

PHIL. I would not thus, so lightly, win my mistress.
Oh, cousin, cousin ! Lady Ariane !

PER. I tell thee, Philip, when thy mistress came
'Twas as the sun bursts on wind-shaken flowers
And they are hushed to rest. She wore a robe
Of crimson spangled thick with golden stars.
From her white throat it fell, and swept the earth
In pride, soft-carpeted with verdure cool,
Whereon she moved with more than mortal grace,
Each footstep cadenced like melodious verse
And every gesture music. In her hair
Gems sparkled, silver-pale, like frozen dew,
Yet these less lustrous than her dazzling eyes
That outshone sun-kissed waves. Young Bacchus
came,

And like the sea upon the Naxian shore
The enraptured concourse thundered their applause ;
With such a look she thrilled him, where he stood,

A glowing god with purple clusters crowned,
And on her forehead set, or seemed to set,
As if to make full moonrise 'mongst those stars,
The melting jewel of a passionate kiss.

PHIL. God's blood !

PER. She blushed, she trembled, she sank down—

PHIL. Hold—

PER. Like a bride whom love has vanquished quite
He bore her to his car.

PHIL. Enough, enough !

I'll hear no more !

PER. With that the whole assembly
Rose to their feet, and from the grassy benches
Where they lay spread in sunshine holiday
Stormed the arena. Denys l'Auxerrois—

PHIL. Denys !

PER. 'Twas he that played the amorous god—
Slipped from our midst unseen ; and not a leaf
Nor silver ripple trembling to the shout
Of ' Denys ! Denys ! ' whispered of the way
He had withdrawn.

PHIL. A quack ! A jackanapes !
A fellow that laid by his spade and hoe
To sell greengroceries in the market-place—
Gawds, gewgaws of the East, vile tinsel trash
Sea-captains bring their trulls from the Levant ;
Attar and civet, jingling trinket toys,
With God knows what unholy drugs beside !
A waif o' the woods ! A she-goat-suckled kid,
Begotten by the rankest of the herd ;
A prick-eared faun as ever peeped through leaves
At village maidens bathing in a pool
And stole away their clothes !

PER. Peace ; you were best :

His Bacchants come ; for they have sworn to find
Their truant ; all the livelong night they'll dance
Beneath the stars, and sleep away the dawn.

Enter BLANCHE, FRANCES, IMOGEN *and* PETRONILLA
with other girls dressed as Bacchants.

CHOR. OF BACCHANTS.

Swift, with the song the arrow sings,
Out of the west flew the wild doves' wings
To the weed-hung caves where the salt winds wail
And the broad sea stretches with never a sail.
But the coming of Love was swifter far :
Lightly he leapt from his vine-wreathed car :
Like a flower when the rain-drops its beauty have
bowed

She sank on his sheltering breast ; like a cloud
Descending from heaven at twilight to sleep,
A virgin white-veiled on the mountain-steep.
God of the ivy, god of the vine,
Hide thee no more while the pale stars shine !
When day like a reaper hath bound up his sheaves
Love shepherds the shadows and love lifts the leaves.

[Exeunt.

ORME (*who has entered unperceived in the wake of the
Bacchants*). A very pretty band of deaconesses
Whose lamps are plenished with right holy oil.
Here is a pool where one might cast a net
And draw a tailless mermaid safe to land.
Peruse, I counsel thee, turn fisherman,
And the full moon that warms the blood of whelks
Give thee good sport. What, my lord Chastellux,
Good fortune brings you safe home to Auxerre !
We give you merry welcome.

PHIL. By the mass,
Too merry, sir.

ORME. Now by the ivied wand
Of Bacchus and the newborn babe of joy——

PHIL. I would the devil's grandam had your wand
To lay it on the little bastard's back
Ere he be breeched. His mother was a harlot
And every vice that she was kind to stands
Sponsor for his damnation.

ORME. Ye kind gods !
Was it for this the flask was disinterred,
The dead vine buds, and that old drab the earth
Reels in her drunken gait towards the sun,
When she should turn and weep the year away
In Winter's icy arms ?

PHIL. A murmur reached me
About this flask. Is't not some Roman thing
Still flaked and coated with Falernian ?

PER. What gods were they who pruned the vines and
crushed

The purple berries, when some Satyr made
A blowpipe of his flute, and naked nymphs
Blew the bright bubble with their amorous breath,
When the mere rinsings in a modern mouth,
After a dozen centuries laid in earth,
Sets the weak brain a-rocking !

ORME. Oh, brave bottle,
Not galbanum nor frankincense nor myrrh,
Blessed by the Patriarch of Jerusalem
And drunk upon the Holy Sepulchre,
Wormwood nor mallow, feverfew nor sage,
Sipped from a sacring bell with *salvum fac*,
Nor lanten lancet, ever drained the ducts
Or purged the mortal humours quite away

As thine all-healing breath.

PHIL. Ye are raving mad !

Stark mad !

PER. Oh follow, follow through the night !

The priestess moon ascends heaven's altar-stair

To bless a world that draws its breath in sleep.

Oh, silvery largess ! Star-distilling balm !

Sister and queen of all the regal spheres,

Generous as love and holier than death,

White sorceress that witchest earth and sky

To bind them with bright chains in one deep trance !

Listen ! Upon the hills joy is awake

And will not close an eye till morning break.

Hail, sceptred train ! Hail ! Dance and pipe and
chant !

Warm on my breast I feel white bosoms pant !

Forth, forth ; with flying feet shy bliss pursue ;

Then welcome, madness, 'mid the stars and dew !

[*He rushes out.*]

PHIL. I'll follow him, and nail this wildcat's skin,

If I can take him, to her father's door.

Is Auxerre mad ? And Ariane ? Away !

I'll not believe she loves him !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

The garden of a deserted manor. DENYS and ARIANE.

DENYS. I hate the night because it hides thy face.

AR. And I the day that tears thee from my side.

DENYS. Night, lend thy wings, and with thee we'll
keep pace,

For there is light enough with love for guide.

AR. Oh, I should mourn in heaven with thee away.

DENYS. And what is hell but when we bid adieu !

AR. Unpractised love, that made such long delay,
Forging the little link 'twixt ' I ' and ' you.'

DENYS. Give me thy lips : then on the ground we'll
sit

And thou shalt tell what drew thee to this bower.

AR. Where glow-worms pale their signal lanterns lit
I flew, a dizzy moth, from flower to flower.

The gossamers for me their clue unwound,

The nightjar called me o'er the charmed ground.

[ARIANE *sings.*]

Brindled bird with feathered claw

Come and go on mothy wing ;

Light upon the stubble-straw,

Crouch a shade where shadows swing.

Whip-poor-will, and Whip-poor-will,

Make complaint from hill to hill.

Enter FRANCES, PETRONILLA, BLANCHE, IMOGEN *and*
the rest of their train.

PET. Ghosts ! Ay, a pair of them ! Unwary love,
That flitted hither where hobgoblins mew.

IMOGEN. Look, how Love writes the sequel to his
masque

While death looks o'er his shoulder ! Know you
not

The place is haunted ?

[*She sings.*]

Gibbet rafters, now let slip

Bats a-gape with felon leer,

Gap-toothed gum and tightened lip

Grinning sin from ear to ear ;

Evil workings old and new
Devil's errands let them do.

PHILIP *rushes in followed by ORME.*

PHIL. Devil, I do not know what ghost lurks here,
But thine shall bear him company, unless
Thy black soul tumble to a pit so deep,
Though all the fiends make ladders of their backs,
Thou canst not climb to God's glad world again.

AR. Now shall we witness valour's escalade !

I tell thee, hero, that the hope's forlorn !

What, we are neutrals, madman, you and I !

PHIL. Ay, mad : a moon-mocked wave drawn from
grim deeps

Thus, thus upon the rocks I dash my heart.

[He flings himself at DENYS, but is pulled away.]

Oh, God ! Oh, hell ! Oh—

ORME.

Back !

PHIL.

I come too late

To woo : and I have hung my harness up
And weapons bright of honourable war,
But with the blackest armour of revenge
Fate clothes my soul.

ORME.

Wert thou not drunk with love

I'd reason with thee. Moonlight never kissed

A naughtier blade. *[Takes his sword from him.]*

Alack, that Hymen's torch

Should shower such sleet for sparkles ! Come away ;

To-morrow's sun will laugh at thee, and thou,

Heart-whole, reckon little of an aching brow.

[He leads him away. The scene closes while the Bacchants sing.]

Oh Love, thou hast given him nightshade wine,
The poisoned heart, the maddened brain ;
But we have drunk of the flask divine,
Ours is the joy without the pain.

SCENE III

A room in the Castle of Auxerre. AUXERRE, BISHOP, CLEOPHAS, PAINTERS, TAPISERS and other artists and craftsmen.

AUX. A Baptist be it then ; but look you, friend,
No gaunt enthusiast clamouring ' Repent,'
But young, swarth-limbed, with honey-sweetened
lips,
And dark-brown curls.

PAINT. At your command, my lord ;
Yet I had thought the Israelitish spies
Bearing the grapes of Eshcol on a staff :—
The subject is——

AUX. Apt, but too obvious ;
And stale moreover. Let the budding vine,
With young green tendrils mingle with his curls,
And he himself as joy's forerunner stand
Half in the sunlight, half in shadow.

PAINT. Sir,
Your wish shall be obeyed ; if my poor skill
Can but approach what phantasy portrays,
'Twill be a noble picture.

AUX. What hast thou ?

TAP. My lord, the drawing for the tapestry.
Here I conceive him as the bird of God,
Raphael, when the smoke-offended fiend
Fled from Ecbatana to Egypt's bounds

The reek abhorred. I promise you, it curls
Voluminous, a dun with sulphur tinged,
Kindling to gold where the bright seraph's wing
Flashes in hot pursuit. The maid, installed
Upon a bed of down, silk-canopied
And laced with silver threads, awaits her spouse,
The enviable Tobias.

AUX. We'll hang this
In the guest-chamber where the Bishop sleeps ;
Sure, 'tis a scriptural theme.

BISH. Apocryphal,
My most dear lord, as the new gospel is
And its forerunner ; eh, my Cleophas ?
What saith the learned Grecian ?

CLEOPH. Oh, my lord,
My business is with graven images,
And of divinity I know no more
Than can be hewn in stone.

AUX. Methinks this saint
Should find a place on our Cathedral front ;
There is an angle of the western tower
That lacks adornment : an uneasy perch
Save for seraphic foothold. How say ye, friend ?
Denys would grace it well.

CLEOPH. I'll set him there
As I remember him one breathless day,
Towards the end of summer, when he sprang
Aloft to greet the coming rain : so clung
Among the scaffolding, his mantle cast,
A very swallow, bird-eyed, elfish ; pinned
Fanwise by the rushing wind to his house of clay.

Enter an attendant.

ATTEN. The Sieur de Chastellux desires admittance.

AUX. Conduct him hither. Come, my friends, pack traps

And hence : to-morrow we will meet again.

TAP. My lord, the tapestry were not complete
Without its sister-piece : the good old man
Tobit, his blinded eyes new-straked with gall,
Rejoices to behold his son ; the bride
Waits on her camel ; the white city dust
Takes fire and burns with dancing motes of gold
Where stands the indulgent angel.

AUX. By the spear
Of great Goliath, huge as weaver's beam,
I like this best of all ; treble the gold
With this ; be liberal, but not ostentatious ;
Subdue what's loud and let all shimmer soft
In a woven twilight.

TAP. My most duteous thanks.

[*Exeunt Sculptors, Painters, Tapisers, etc.*]

Enter PHILIP.

AUX. Son Philip, I embrace you : welcome home !

PHIL. Not yet a son, though like to have my share
In promiscuity of kisses, if
Rumour speaks true.

AUX. All's fair in love and war.
You from the camp, from Spain, and must I teach
you

The antique saw ? Why, once at Pampeluna—
You know the peach bloom ? just a stain of rose
Upon the sun-kissed curve ; and gold-brown eyes
Like bees in apple-blossoms. Do I touch you ?
What ? There are softer memories to bring
Back from the wars than spurs well won.

PHIL.

My lord,

I bring a challenge. I have come from one
Whose news are strange ; nor could I think them true
But that mine eyes bear witness, and your tongue
Affirms the general madness. Where will they end,
These Satan's Sabbaths when the sun is down,
That half convert the stars to wantonness ;
These limbs, vermilion in the shameless glare
Of prying torches, leaping unabashed
To cast unholy shadows on the hills ?
What of our laws defied ; our city gates
That should be shut from darkness till day-dawn
Flung wide : our holy men molested ; chased
Down the Cathedral wynd : while the mad crew,
Maids, matrons, youths plunge like the herd of
swine
In brimming Yonne, and frenzied shrieks are heard,
And peals of crazy laughter ?

AUX.

Thou hast learned

Thy lesson well ; 'tis Hermes' pupil speaks,
Monk Hermes, jealous of a rival's power.
Is there a devil in this vinedresser ?
Why, let him cast him out ; charm, countercharm ;
Monk's curse and devil's cantrap ! Silence, devil !
There, won't that quell ye ? But he's up again,
Still unsuppressed ; and faster than before
Patters the Lord's prayer backwards. By my faith,
There's magic in him : he can as surely find
The hidden spring as nuzzling babe the breast ;
He hath an owl that teaches him ; a wolf
Tame to his hand.

PHIL.

Then let him tame my lions ;

For I have brought a leash of them from Spain,
Maned beasts that once shook Atlas with their roar.

AUX. I would the scamp were here.

PHIL. If he be slain
The devil hath his own ; and if he move
Unhurt among the beasts, why God hath shut
The lions' mouths.

AUX. Lord, what a hue and cry
About a stolen kiss ! And yet the thief
Deserves some chastisement—

BISH. Oh, my dear lord,
But that I found you busy with a crowd
Of painters, webbers, sculptors, I had urged—
And blame myself for my too tardy speech
That let the moment slip—yet discipline
And age will lay such clogs upon our tongue—
Yea, claimed the privilege of my holy office,
And forced these questions home, which now,
apposed

By my lord Philip, have no other answer
Than to accept his challenge. You and I
Have scarce perceived the growth of this disease
Which in some measure taints our blood. But he
And every comer cries out we are sick,
The air we breathe infected. News of this
May raise up instruments that God shall whet
To punish not to heal : and in the day
Of visitation storms that bend the grass
Uproot the oak. As I would answer it
To him who holds the keys, this heresy
Which in my conscience long since stands condemned
Must be destroyed. All things that God hath made
May prove His will : and He that bade the fish
Provide the tribute-money may declare
His wrath and vengeance in the lion's mouth ;
And without Him a sparrow cannot fall.

AUX. Psha ! I dissolve this holy synod ! Cant !
Hypocrisy ! What need of further lies ?
Ye have condemned the man already. Go !
Ye plague me with your importunity,
Your tags of scripture ! Have it as you will,
And after claim this as a prodigy,
A heaven-wrought miracle in aid of faith,
That two starved lions slew an unarmed man
And ate him too. Come hither, Ariane ;
Philip, the champion of Christendom,
Impatient waits to woo thee. Sparrows ! Pish !
[Exit.

BISH. You see how variable his temper, Philip :
But thou shalt ply him in another mood
And bend his fiery rashness to thy purpose.
[Exit.

Enter ARIANE.

AR. You sent for me—what is your will ?
PHIL. To tell thee
That thou canst damn or save. Hast thou no pity ?
Forgot are all thy maiden tendernesses,
Thy troth—
AR. I never plighted thee my troth,
And if I did—
PHIL. What then ?
AR. I here retract.
I do not love thee, Philip.
PHIL. Listen, girl.
Thou hast plucked up out of my heart all ruth ;
Wrought me to such distress that rage and hate
Make thee ten thousand times more dear than love.
I love thee more than life and hate thee more
Than everlasting hell.

AR. Strike with thy sword ;
Thou hissest murder—

PHIL. Thou shalt live : I know
Whom I will strike ; and when he rots in earth
I shall lie there where—

AR. Devil, I defy thee.

[*Exit.*

PHIL. Oh hate, thou art more strong than love is weak,
As hawks outsoar the lark that sings of love.
Weak, wanton love ! thus do I spurn thee from me !
[*He rushes out.*

SCENE IV

*The market-place. PETRONILLA, IMOGEN and BLANCHE
with other girls at their stalls. ORME, PERUSE and
BASKERVILLE.*

ORME. Dick, thou should'st be historian of the time ;
Thou hast, methinks, the quaint inquirer's air,
And well could'st write in passing foolish rhyme
The crazy chronicle of old Auxerre.
Sing first how Mars warped from his proper sphere
Disturbs the order of the circling year,
Wrenches earth's course awry, which being set
For coasts where sleet and hail their arrows whet,
Her canvas trimmed for winter, lo, she runs
Wide on the wayward track of milder suns,
And at a bound from roaring Autumn glides
Into the haven where sweet Spring abides.

PER. To succour want, to share what I possess
With hunger, age and needy nakedness—

ORME. Were, spite of heraldry, the true noblesse.

That's beyond cavil. Better days begin
 When any salad-wench may tilt her chin
 At young lords' beards. Here comes her ladyship.

Enter DORIS.

PER. Oh rare! Oh sweet! Oh pale as some white
 slip

Of moonlight among pines; or odours blown
 From flowers unseen through forests dark and lone
 Filled full with night. Now spring is in the lanes,
 And link by link green weeds let down their chains
 In brook and pool by frost no longer bound.

Where autumn's funeral leaves strew the dank
 ground

The laughing winds that lightly come and go
 Into pale fire the azure hyacinths blow.

There are no wrongs to right 'neath such a sky.
 Maiden, with me wilt bid the world good-bye,
 And never heed the hiss of slanderous tongue?

DORIS. Ah, wooing spring! Ah, April fresh and young!

PER. We'll climb the down, and in some wooded height
 Among green-filtered glades of golden light

Those moon-kissed blossoms pluck that shun the day.

DORIS. There the wild pigeons woo among the trees,
 And yet, methinks, thou sweetlier woo'st than they.

PER. Nor know I any flower yields such heartsease
 As Doris' lips. As fresh thou art as dew,
 Or Amaryllis in apparel new
 That tiptoe greets the morn.

[Exeunt PERUSE and DORIS.]

ORME.

And I remain
 A bachelor. Well, well, the flower way's best
 That leaves it all to bees and butterflies.

BASK. I am the man for weddings : I can throw
An old shoe over a marriage coach. Misfits
Worn easy ; there you have your married pair.
MARKET GIRLS. The monk, the monk !

Enter DENYS and HERMES.

HERMES. I'll tell thee what thou art :
A common lewd thief of poor girls' good names ;
The ape is virtuous compared with thee,
The dog lives clean. Thou womanish wanton, thou,
Is there no manhood in thee ? Thou the king
Of a new age ! A ragman's bag of vices
Whereof the cleanliest is cowardice !

DENYS. Why come to market with so curst a tongue ?
That's womanish : but since my lady loves me
I am grown deaf to hate and three parts blind
That nothing see but what is chaste and kind.

PET. Out, thou black-petticoated Satan's wife ;
The devil were the better for thy curses ;
Go, rail at him.

HER. Thy lady ! Easy won !
Why, ragamuffin, thou art No-man's son,
The heir-in-tail of a cast pedlar's pack ;
One civil grown by crying ' What d'ye lack ? '
And chucking chins : not fit among her suite
To follow simpering when she goes to meat,
Carrying her spaniel on a cushion. Oh,
That I had power to touch thy heart ; to show
As in a glass where all is mirrored true
How foul thou art, so fair to outward view.
Seven shapes I saw, each of abhorred sin,
That like the unclean spirits entered in,
Witchcraft, idolatry, concupiscence,

HER. In Heaven's cause
I would not shrink from a more hideous doom.

DENYS. There is a glory in the martyr's tomb ;
But if no blazing crown thy brow awaits
Dar'st thou unlock the dreadful lion-gates,
Walk in their midst, lay an untrembling hand
Upon their shaggy necks ?

HER. At God's command
This were to me mere bliss.

DENYS. So be it then.
Walk with me naked in the lions' den
And die the death thou seekest.

HER. I accept
The challenge.

DENYS. Nay, this hap must be unwept ;
Not worth a woman's tear. The darting sting
Of wasp to you is a more dreaded thing
Than I account the lion's greedy fang.

BLANCHE. Oh, gentle Denys, on thy lips I hang
As doth the bee with faint and hungry sense.
Revive me then with richest eloquence,
Sweet as the rush of April's honey-flow :
The fragrance of thy breath on me bestow,
And powder me with all thy perfumed gold.

[The scene closes.]

SCENE V

Chastellux Castle. A paved courtyard thronged with the common people and connected by a stone stairway with a battlemented roof. AUXERRE, ARIANE, the BISHOP, PHILIP, ORME, JARNAC, MAYOR, MAYORESS, canons, monks and citizens look down from the battlements into a bear-pit, the gates of which open on the courtyard. Men-at-arms are stationed on the steps. DENYS and HERMES stand below among the crowd.

AUX. Now to this business. Good Master Mayor,
It likes me well that you have brought your spouse.
She should be mother of a lion-brood.
Pray you be seated.

MAYOR. I thank you, noble Sir ;
Her father was a butcher ; sight of blood
Ne'er made her sick or faint.

MAYORESS. Come, come, sit down,
And don't be prating when a gentleman
Gives leave to speak. He looks so pale, my lord,
By reason of the flour, for he's a baker
And 'tis a sickly trade.

AUX. A merry crowd !
Some wear blue ribands in their hats, and some
Black garters at the knee.

BISH. These are the friends
Of holy Church, and the blue faction all
Children of Satan.

AUX. Faith, they're the greater number !
What do yon fellows there with pick and shovel ?
Why do the mob so press them ?

JARNAC. Stand aside !
Ralph, get you down and cleave that knot.

- BISH. My lord,
They're busy with the grave.
- AR. The grave ! Oh God !
- AUX. Nay, never tell me common men lack courage !
What ? Stand on the very brink and never blench ?
Fat pullets are ye but the poulterer's wife
Bares a long arm to nab ye by the neck.
Tell me, what badge wear they that dig the grave ?
- BISH. Both blue, my lord !
- AUX. Slaves ! And the hole is dug
For the man that led them, whom they loved and
worshipped,
Bare shoulder-high, proclaimed a demi-god !
Bishop, how will it be when you and I
Are confined ?
- BISH. My dear lord—
- AUX. The thing's unseemly,
And it offends me, Philip, you have sunk
This butcher's blood-pit here before our eyes.
Thou seest how pale my daughter's cheek, and,
faith,
Mine own grow something chalky.
- PHIL. Pardon me,
But we are used to bury there our dogs,
If any bold tyke fall to the bear's claws
Or savage hug.
- AUX. Now, by my sinful soul,
Right reverend bishop, and thy mitred locks,
I will make bold to take thee here to task.
Are we about a lawful business ? Speak,
As you would answer the Eternal Judge
Demanding *quo warranto*.
- BISH. Hear me, Sir.
I take my stand upon inspired example ;

From innocent Isaac to the naughty babes
 That mocked Elisha ; from the prophet-hand
 Of Samuel reeking hot with Agag's blood
 To Cyril hardening his saintly heart
 To slaughter virgins, ay, and flay them too,
 None that serve God dare shrink from shedding
 blood.

Moreover, Daniel—

AUX. Oh, sir, content you !

BISH. Nay, I am not content. What saith the Psalm ?
 The lions roaring after their prey do seek
 Their meat from God. What meat ? A kid, a fawn,
 A hind, an antlered stag, a heretic ?
 God will provide. What men term accidents
 Are textile with the fabric. Doth God's eye
 Err, His hand stray, that He should patch the web
 With faults and blemishes ? We make appeal
 To Him who hears the hungry lions roar.
 Shall He not much more hear the famished cry
 Of His own flock ?

HER. (*pushing past the men-at-arms and ascending the steps*). Hear me, my lord Auxerre,
 And you, most reverend father : let God show
 The meanest of His servants dares as much
 As Satan's chosen captain. I will walk
 Unarmed among the lions. If I shrink
 How shall I tremble at Christ's judgment-seat !

AUX. Come, you shall bait a badger or a bear ;
 Would'st make a Nero of me ?

DENYS. Good my lord,
 I meant a show to make a merry Easter,
 Not a sad bout with Satan.

AUX. Out upon it,
 I care not if hell wins. Let them cast lots

For who shall enter first.

[*The lot falls on DENYS.*

So ; Denys has it.

You, Philip, certify to all assembled
That none had access to these beasts of thine
Save their own keeper for this se'night past.

PHIL. I certify and will confirm on oath,
If necessary, that since Easter Eve
They have not broke their fast.

AUX. Why then, proceed.

PHIL. Let me advise that both be strictly searched
Before they enter, lest or knife or drug
Concealed upon their persons either slay
These rough-voiced arbiters of human guilt,
Or, like the sop in Cerberus' triple jaws
Make them forget their natures, and lie down
Harmless as sleeping dogs.

AUX. It shall be so.

Let them be searched.

[*JARNAC and men-at-arms search DENYS and HERMES.*

JAR. My lord, there's nothing here.

MAN-AT-ARMS. Nor here.

JAR. There's neither dagger, blade nor charm
Nor drug concealed upon them.

PHIL. Hold, my lord,

For I have heard of an enchanted gem
Which in the arm 'twixt skin and flesh enclosed
Shields from wild beasts the naked Indian.

Let them be stripped.

ORME. Truly a wise precaution.

A mirror or a piece of polished steel,
Such as this monk might use to trim his beard by,
Had else befooled us all. For 'tis well known

These great grim cats cannot endure the sight
Of their own whiskers.

[*Men-at-arms strip DENYS and HERMES.*

JAR. (*after further search*). There's nor seam nor scar
Nor other stitches of such broidery
Upon their limbs.

PHIL. Let them go naked in
And not resume their clothes.

AUX. So 'twas agreed.
Jarnac, unbolt these beasts.

JAR. Please you, my lord,
Shall both be loosed at once? One were enough
For such a springald.

AUX. Wind up the chains, I say!
Denys, ascend, for thou must enter first.

[*Guards wind up the chains which lift the iron hatches.*
As DENYS ascends the steps and climbs down into
the pit HERMES and ARIANE kneel in prayer.

ORME. How without guidance can a poor dumb beast
Know which of these petitions to obey?
Now would I not be heaven's almoner
For half of Peter's fees.

[*A lion roars.*

DENYS (*from the pit*). A rope! A rope!
Give me a rope, good officer.

[*An officer seeking for a rope picks up HERMES' girdle*
and throws it to DENYS.

PHIL. Sorcery! Sorcery! Set the gates wide! Make
way!

[*AUXERRE and all the notables on the roof descend the steps*
to the courtyard; the gates are flung open by the
men-at-arms and DENYS comes forth with the two
lions leashed in the monk's girdle.

PHIL. Now by the sepulchre of Christ, I swear,
Since Maundy Thursday they've not tasted meat.

DENYS. My lord, you said but now 'twas Easter Eve,
Aye, and proclaimed you'd take your oath of it.
You have o'erreached yourself. These savage beasts
Whose appetite you treacherously did whet
That they might drink my blood, are grown so weak
My lady here might pat them.

AR. Gentle beasts !

Oh, I could fling my arms about your necks,
Deck you with garlands such as Mænads hung
On Bacchus' pards ! Shout, shout your Evoes !
Hail to thee, Denys ! Lead him through the streets,
And make this day his happy festival.

[DENYS leads the lions among the people, who follow him
to the town singing.

Oh, braver than Bethlehem's shepherd !

Oh, wiser than Babylon's sage !

The wolf and the lynx and the leopard

Their fury assuage !

The hunger and hate thou abhorrest

Like lions shall couch at thy knee,

And fear that is lord of the forest

Be vassal to thee !

ACT II

SCENE I

A room in Auxerre Castle. AUXERRE and PHILIP.

AUXERRE. She will not have thee, Philip? Well,
well, well.

A man of mettle, Philip, should contract
Marriage as statesmen do alliances
Where policy commands. Lord, don't I know
That there are men so-called, uxorious slaves,
Fellows whose soft wits love has stolen away
And left them fond to foolishness ! A vice,
Yea, by the gods, a vice that saps their strength
And gives the advantage to their enemies.
Be not thou one of them, but let the hours
Move to a steady shaping of thine ends ;
So on the council-chamber of thy heart
Love like the painted ceiling shall look down,
A thing admired when seldom leisure serves,
Unheeded when great deeds are in debate.

PHILIP. She sums all purposes, and without her
There's nothing worth the striving.

Aux. Body of me,
 She's flesh and blood and weighed by avoirdupois ;
 In winter I have heard her blow her nose,
 And by these signs do verily believe
 She is not kneaded out of snow and fire,

Nor yet imparadised and beyond reach
Of Satan's bird-bolts.

PHIL. A week ago, my lord,
I should have chafed at such disparagement,
Impatiently rejected any praise
That did not sound her flawless, sans-pareil.
But where the air is tainted, even in sleep
We may draw in contagion with our breath.
Sir, I much fear lest she have caught the plague.

AUX. How mean you ?

PHIL. To be plain with you, my lord,
'Tis common talk that Denys hath cast his spell
Upon your daughter.

AUX. What ! This vinedresser,
This slave, this clod, this bit of sunburnt earth !

PHIL. Even he that could beguile you to forget
His baseness and ennoble appetite
With dignities that would become a god.
But there is more to follow.

AUX. Speak : leave not out
A single letter of his infamy.

PHIL. She, sir, 'tis said, regards with favouring eye
His suit ; to sum up all, this mountebank
Aims at your daughter and your seigneuralty,
Perhaps your life, for he devotes to death
With charms as potent as he woos to love.

AUX. You have said enough. Go ; leave me to my
thoughts.

[PHILIP retires.]

Who stirs ?

An attendant enters.

Go, fellow, fetch thy mistress hither.

[Exit attendant.]

This sword thrust home shall be a spur to deeds
Of vengeance and of reparation. I,
That should have tutored youth, and with the
 scourge
Of my authority chastised excess,
Have given my blessing where I owed a curse,
Countenancing that which I have not rebuked,
Yea, been in some sort master of these revels.
But now—

Enter ARIANE.

Come hither, child. Into what snare
 Hath crept the fledgling bird of thy young love ?
 You drop your eyes ; you cannot answer me,
 But your dumb looks loudly inform against you.
 It is that same damned wizard who bewitched
 Your father's senses : he who drew so wide
 His magic circle, that it compassed in
 Auxerre and all that it contains. But now
 I do repent me that I ever set
 The seal of my approval on him. Here
 I utterly abjure him, as a villain,
 Banned and beyond the pale of law, accursed,
 And with his life he pays for his misdeeds.

AR. Oh, do not lend yourself to calumny
 To wield the murderer's knife she fears to draw.
 Nothing, I swear, that might not well become
 My mother, when first to her blushing self
 She made avowal of her love—

Aux. Thy mother !
See how the poison works ! 'Twas justly said
The very air is fraught with pestilence.
Girl, thou'rt bewitched. Thy cousin Philip's noble,
And thou preferr'st a peasant ; honourable,

Thy choice is on a filthy libertine ;
Philip comes home a soldier cased in steel,
A captain and a valiant gentleman ;
Thou keep'st thy kisses for a wanton boy
For whom some injured husband's dagger waits
To stab him through adulterous pillows. Philip !

[PHILIP *advances*.

This mischief breeds apace like blight in June.
To-day—at sunset—in the market-place
Where gnats swarm thickest—buzz their loudest—go
And thin them like the beak of hawking bird.
For by my soul this get of mine own loins,
That would disgrace me, shall not bastardize
The honour of my house—will she or will she not
I'll make her thine. And Denys at thy hands
Shall have his patent of nobility.
Count of Auxerre ! Not that, not that, ye gods !

[*Excunt* AUXERRE and PHILIP.

AR. My curses on that long white loveless face !
'Tis he hath played upon my father's heart.
Oh, they are mad who seek to trample out
My sunbeam, as men do some mischievous spark
That means to set the mountains in a blaze.
Merciful heavens ! Show me a way to save him !

[*Exit* ARIANE.

SCENE II

The market-place by the river-side. In the background the west front of the Cathedral with scaffolding on which stone-carvers and other craftsmen are at work. The sun sets and it grows dark during this scene.

Enter PERUSE and DORIS followed by ORME and BASKERVILLE.

PERUSE. We have given ourselves to her strong hand,
who guides
The exultant stars, that press for ever on,
Now in the sun's exceeding glory veiled,
Now visibly companioned by the moon,
Cold spouse of ice and bride of glittering snow ;
To her who chariots the wheeling world
Through space and time, sister infinities ;
Her in whose name dim eastward peaks receive
The rosy baptism of returning day,
And sleepless streams that travel all night long
In darkness, drink the golden cup of dawn,
With azure mixed, and with that draught brimful
Check their charmed waters, that forget to flow
And all the toil wherewith they reach the sea.
Oh, Doris, we have worshipped in the woods,
And with the incense of the meadow flowers
Mingled our own thanksgivings : Nature heard
And we have shared her blessing.

ORME. On my word,
A pretty tale of Daphne and the laurels !
Nature I love, but don't admire her morals.
Good M and N remember 'mid your rushes
And suns and stars, man is a beast that blushes.

PER.

There's no grace

Of font or cup, of consecrating hands
Or pentecostal spirit, like the breath
Of the sweet breeze beneath the summer sky,
When the deep windows of the soul unclose
And all our senses are as doors set wide,
And every moment is a messenger,
Whose feet bring in glad tidings. Blessed Time,
Bright stars that watch the reawakening day,
The primal bliss regained, lost long ago
When man his naked innocence forsook.

ORME. Come, come, no juggling with the Pentateuch !

You will not find the equal of the oyster
For continence, in castle, hut or cloister.
Besides, those fig-leaf times must give us pause ;
We must fix bounds to sumptuary laws ;
And I for one dislike the fashions scanty
Of our first parents, delicto flagrante :
Mere nudity betrays what Art misshapes,
Although no doubt it suits arboreal apes.

DORIS. Oh, love, the world is changed ;

Man, no more estranged,
Weeps not nor wastes his few brief years in sorrow ;
Humbling his restless pride,
The goods the gods provide
He takes, and asks no bounty of to-morrow ;
With birds and beasts earth's bliss he shares
And seeks no far-off Heaven, nor other life than
theirs.

PER. Out of the womb of night

He comes into the light,
Springing awhile upon the sunny grass ;
'Mid flowers and twinkling blades,
A flower himself he fades,

Gone like a sunbeam when the shadows pass ;
Earth's sojourner, Time's fleeting guest ;
Rich is the banquet spread, and long the welcome rest.

DORIS. Who would change these skies
For hues of Paradise,
Or what of bliss untried Elysium yields ?
Not fabled asphodel
Nor amaranth excel
The homely blossoms of our native fields ;
Pale ghosts if any wander there
Pine for their sunny home in realms of upper air.

PER. Here pleasure lives unblamed ;
Earth naked nor ashamed,
Hideth no more a guilty front with snow ;
But lays her bosom bare
To the soft-wooing air,
And inly feels the warm sun's fruitful glow,
That her rich womb divinely feeds,
And fills with quickening life all that her bosom
breeds.

DORIS. As into seas that sleep
Wide-branching rivers sweep
The loamy wealth of mountain-girdled lands,
Clouding the azure brine
With colours opaline,
The crumbling ore of all their margent sands ;
A milder sun distils his beams,
And drops a tintured gold in heaven's crystalline
streams.

PER. And when the day hath bowed
His head through night's dark cloud,
A shining wonder in the west succeeds ;
Where in the twilight sky,
Thick with heaven's chivalry,

Mars through the dark his starry cohorts leads ;
Not now to threaten or appal,
He wears his crimson mail to grace earth's festival.

The wreathéd barges glide
Deep laden on the tide ;
The water splashes to the lazy oar ;
With sound of dancing feet,
Faint bursts of music sweet
Float in soft cadence to the reedy shore ;
The south winds toss the olives gray,
And the ripe vineyards bask in the last beam of day.

Then sing the Age of gold,
Cumæan lore foretold :
When Autumn reaches forth his hand to Spring,
Let no divorcing snows
Of winter interpose,
But tender skies to full fruition bring
The budding leaf, the lengthening spray,
And all the forward shoots that dream of coming May.
ORME. My conscience ! that's extremely fine ;
I would not alter half a line ;
You've taken Hell-gates off their hinges,
And quenched the fire that sinners singes.
The little gods, in merry rout,
Lar, Lemur, Faun, come tumbling out,
And hornéd satyrs gaily prance,
Long used on burning coals to dance,
Too glad to cool a scorching rump
On grass-grown bank or mossy stump.

[*During the last speech a barge, rowed by men and women
and loaded with fruit, has come to the quay. They
disembark and sing.*

GIRLS. Gather in the wheat and rye,
 Gather in the barley ;
 Where the sheaves are tossed on high
 Lovers' eyes hold parley.

Gather in the purple grape,
 Gather in the golden ;
 Tendrilled curls that will escape
 Lovers' lips embolden.

Where the ruddy liquor brims
 Foaming in the presses,
 Bacchus stains sweet lovers' limbs,
 Bacchus stains their kisses.

Welling azure, welling gold,
 Down the river marges,
 Full and broad the stream is rolled,
 'Gainst our bluff-bowed barges.

Life's a stream : then let it flow,
 Cloudless heavens glassing,
 Golden hours that come and go,
 With no sense of passing.

The WORKMEN on the scaffold.

Up the ladder, dizzy-slanted,
 With our heavy hods we climb ;
 Wheresoe'er the scaffold's planted
 You may hear our trowels chime.

MARKET GIRLS. Come, you hewers, dusty-throated,
 White as millers mealy-coated,
 Leave the chisel, leave the mallet,
 Here are dainties for your palate ;
 Here are orbs of ivory tintured,

Scarlet, black and purple-cinctured :
Open, golden-lidded vases,
Show your rubies, chrysoprases ;
Amethystine ichor bleeds
In the ripe pomegranate seeds.

A STONE-CARVER (*above*). Mates, what say you ? I
for one

Pity poor Pygmalion.
Living lips had he e'er tasted,
He had surely never wasted
Kisses on a block of stone.
Let some master worn and weary,
Quavering a miserere,
Shape in marble everlasting
Stephen stoned or Jerome fasting,
Scentless flowers, frozen pleasures,
Chastity that keeps its treasures
Locked within a marble zone.
These are senseless things we fashion,
Cheeks that never burned with passion,
Arms upon cold bosoms folded,
Lips in loveless beauty moulded,
Martyrs praying prayers unuttered,
Garments by no breezes fluttered,
Alb and amice, cope and crozier,
Cowl and veil and scapulary ;
Give me something warmer, rosier,
Give me laughter, live and merry,
Lips where I may press my own.

A WORKMAN. Down the ladders, rung by rung,
Swarm and scramble—on you go !

ANOTHER. Wheresoe'er a rope is hung
That's the way to travel—so !

[*All descend pell-mell.*]

ORME. They all rush past me—a most noble bird
Gaudily plumed and elegantly spurred ;
Must I not scratch where they scratch, be debarred
From the sweet pleasures of the poultry-yard,
And where the dunghill odours blow
In lonely splendour flap and crow ?

[He dances fantastically.]

PET. He's got the holy vertigo !

ORME. I've seen a ghost : it stands in view of all,
In the long chestnut walk a sapling tall,
A single tree (how could the thing escape us ?)
Bare as a boggart or the god Priapus !

BASK. Then tighten your girdle
Till Winter has dined !
Sing, ho, the chinked hurdle,
The wolf's in the wind !

ORME. Oho ! brave times brave juices breed !
Come, jolly grape, our friend in need,
Come, drunken gaoler, thou that turn'st the key
On the dull guards and sett'st the prisoners free,
Till in red riot leaping to the stars
They roar like flame that bursts from dungeon-bars !

ALL. Alas !

Enter DENYS.

DENYS. What is this cry of grief ?

PET. We're wailing for the turning leaf,
That summer should succeed to spring
And autumn follow harvesting,
That after plenty comes distress,
And after laughter heaviness,
And after love satiety,
And in the midst of life to die :
That this long respite was a cheat,

That none with Time or Fate may treat
Since Death that will no parley hold
Lay ambushed for the Age of Gold.

DENYS. Go, some of you, and ring a peal !

Make the fretted belfries reel ;
Rooks and jackdaws, round and round
Tumble madly to the sound !
And, ye holy idols, break
Your stony fast for joy's sweet sake !
Quit your niches casting down
Crook and cross and martyr's crown ;
New saints, old saints, saints half-carved,
Abbot plump and hermit starved,
Saints embrowned and weather-beaten,
Saints whose rags the breezes sweeten,
Whole, dismembered, shod or bare,
Come and foot it in the square !
Dance until your marble grain
Throbs quick fire in every vein,
Dead with living, flesh with stone :
Dance till backward-flowing Yonne
Summon from their far sea-caves
Yesterday's astonished waves ;
Dance the metal from the mine,
Dance the clusters from the vine,
Dance the moth from her dark cell,
Dance the chicken from its shell,
Cub from litter, calf from cow ;
Dance the leaves off twig and bough,
Dance them bare in wood and glen,
Dance till they bud green again !

[*He tosses a ball into the square ; a wild dance begins ;
the bells ring out, the ball flies to and fro, monks and
canons issuing from the precincts join in the sport*

THE CLERGY. Orientem oculis,
 Hesperum pererra,
 Urbes amœnissimas
 Quotquot sint in terra,
 Gloriosum ceteris
 Lumen est Auxerra.
 Non videntur inopes
 Nec jejunum genus,
 Hic esurientium
 Omnis venter plenus,
 Bacchus lenit stomachum,
 Lenit corda Venus.
 Vinum cella premitur,
 Nummus implet arcam,
 Nummis nos et doliis
 Mitigamus Parcam,
 Ergo non auferimur
 In Charonis barcam.
 Ave, ætas aurea
 Reducis Saturni,
 Solvat deus vincula
 Frigoris hiberni,
 Æternumque janua
 Clausa sit Averni !

THE LAITY. Shout, drunken bells, tower- and turret-
 shakers,
 Clash as ye meet with music in your blows,
 Wild northern war, a sea-fight 'mid the breakers,
 Battle-shock and battle-song while the red wine flows!
 Burst like a flower with music in each petal,
 Break like a shower of meteoric sound,
 Bay, deep-mouthed dogs with throat and tongue of
 metal,
 Circle, wild birds, on wings of clangour round !

Dance, giant bells, to feast and laughter bidden !
When ye rejoice the clouds' cold valleys hear,
And ancient hills with earthquake-thunder chidden
Rise from their seats and answer with a cheer.

Enter ARIANE on horseback : the ball drops ; the bells stop ; the crowd stands still. She advances to
DENYS.

ARIANE. Delay not ! Hence ! Philip—young Chastellux—

Is at your gate ! Go, go ; they swear to take
Your life, he and his men-at-arms ! I came
To warn you ; there is time ! Oh, how I rode !
He watched me from the castle window, guessed
My errand and pursued. Away ! I hear
His horses' hoofs.

DENYS. How beautiful she is !

[DENYS pauses for an instant gazing at her ; then turns away, springs up the scaffolding and disappears.
PHILIP with JARNAC and his men-at-arms gallop in.

PHILIP. Dismount, look to the lady, Jarnac ; Ralph,
With Edmund, Nicholas and William, climb
The scaffolding ; to the third tier, you fools ;
What, are you blind and have you shed your eyes
Spurring so fast ? Just there he vanished ; caught
His cloak and left a shred of it hanging.

ORME. Ah !

Doubtless on one of Moses' horns, exalted
To mark the spot where cacodæmon vaulted.
I pity those poor horns ; their fate is odd,
Serving as cloak-pegs for a pagan god.

PHIL. Enough, sir. Madam, unless your ladyship
Prefers to ride alone, your escort waits.

CROWD. No, no ; we won't allow it ; we'll escort her !

A MASON. She doesn't want this lordling, I can see ;

We'll take her to her father ; were't ten mile,

Hop, skip and jump, I'd go with her.

AR.

Come then,

And my dear thanks be yours.

[Exit with crowd.]

RALPH *(returning with the others)*. Clerestory, crypt,

Vault, gallery, platform, tower and fretted tomb,

Aisle, transept, chapel, we have searched them all

And he is nowhere to be found.

PHIL.

What say you ?

RALPH. My lord, he has escaped us.

PHIL.

Wretched tools !

Where were your crossbows when he scaled the
towers ?

Good God, you might have winged him then !

ORME.

A bat !

A little vermined bat, the abortion of an ape

The devil pitied and gave wings to ! Hist !

A swarm, a swarm ! By horned Acheron

And thin-ribbed ghosts that flit on Lethe's bank,

You hit me, sir ! Here's magic for you then,

Reverendissime ! The sport grows rough

When priest and laic play at blindman's buff !

*[A scene of wild disorder ensues, priests and laity,
soldiers and citizens tumbling over each other in the
deepening twilight.]*

SCENE III

A room in Auxerre Castle. AUXERRE and HERMES.

AUXERRE. I'll pitch the statues in the river-bed ;
The powdered dust of jewelled glass I'll scatter
Wide o'er its wave : I'll found a holy league,
A guild of idol-breakers ; they shall range
The city like destroying angels ; smite
The first-born of our fleshly lusts, the bronze
And marble breed of Paphians, the curled boys,
The eagles, swans, bulls, centaurs, satyrs, Fauns ;
These bubbles of the lecher's boiling heart
I'll burst, and pour the desecrated lees
Into the common sewer.

HERMES. My lord—my lord,
The house of God—Earth's dedicated glories—

AUX. The house of God ! a carven stumbling-block
Piled on the road to heaven ; away with it !
Death to the tempter whose lascivious pipe
Hath given lubricity a shape in stone
And made God's house accursed !

HER. Man's handiwork
You may break down, though consecrate to God :
The sin were not so heinous : to destroy
The guiltiest wretch in God's own image made
And send the soul unrescued back to Him,
Were most presumptuous murder. Will you play
The persecutor to revive the Faith,
Using the bloody weapons of old Rome,
Mad 'gainst the Cross, to win a soul for Christ ?
Here's an exchange of parts to make hell merry
And angels doubt heaven's scheme to save mankind.
Oh, do no murder in the name of love.

None but thy mistress to ride on thy back ;
With voice and with hand to caress the proud steed
That bore her so well in the hour of her need ;
An angel of succour, deliverer, hailed
In the light of her love, by love's peril unveiled.
He sued not, he sighed not ; nor knelt on his knee :
A silent betrothal hath given him to thee.
Then fear not, bright lady : though torn from thy
side,
Whom danger has plighted, hate shall not divide :
In the spring like a flower he shall lift up his head ;
The joy-bells shall ring : whom thou lov'st thou
shalt wed ;
And thy tender young bosom as fruitful as fair
Shall blossom like May with the hope of Auxerre.

Enter PERUSE, DORIS, ARIANE.

PERUSE. My lord—

AUX. Well, Sir, what is your will ? You come
At an unseasonable hour : bring
A rabble at your heels, whose insolence
Bespeaks them drunk and dangerous : that lady
I do not know ; and am ashamed to own
This for my daughter : panting, blushing, blowed
As any farm lass, hired o' market days,
After a romp beneath the harvest-moon.

PER. Your people wish me to acquaint you, Sir,
That Philip Chastellux, armed men at his back,
Rode down this evening to the market-place,
Meaning to murder Denys, but in good time
Your daughter saved him—

AUX. To your chamber, girl !

Away I say !

[*Exit* ARIANE.]

Bring me some wine there : rage
Shakes my old limbs like fever—

[*Wine is brought by an attendant.*

PER. Pardon, my lord :

I will defer what else I have to say.

AUX. Defer ? Defer ? No, no : I'll hear it now :

Give me more wine : proceed.

PER. The citizens

Are jealous for his safety : they demand

Your present promise to protect him : next—

In this dear cause we ask the dearest bond—

The marriage of the lady Ariane,

With him whose sole possession is the love

Of every man and woman in Auxerre,

The centre of our hopes—

AUX. (*bursts into wild laughter*). I have been drunk,

Said I not so ? And you, it seems, were fools ;

Fools to believe a drunkard's promises.

Think you that such are binding in the law ?

By God, but I will prove a sober judge !

No fear, no favour, and not much ill will ;

But just enough to edge the sword of justice

And make the headsman do his duty. Quick

(*To the attendant*) Let the west tower be manned !

Send Jarnac here—

[*Exit attendant.*

They shall have answer sharp and to the point :

Winged words, my merry masters ! (*Shouting*) Man
the keep !

Let every loophole send an arrow forth !

Enter JARNAC.

Send word to Philip Chastellux : tell him
To fall upon this rabble in their flight !
They must be swung a little here, good Jarnac,
But he shall deal such bounteous measure to them
That they shall thank me for my tender mercies.
Monk, to the bishop's palace, and entreat
His instant presence.

[Exeunt.]

[A confused noise is heard without ; words of command, twanging of bowstrings, cries of wounded men, and finally the sound of the mob in full retreat.]

SCENE IV

The same. Midnight. Storm. AUXERRE,
BISHOP, JARNAC.

BISHOP. My counsel is that you declare him dead ;
Civilly dead undoubtedly he is,
Being under ban, and forfeit of his life.
It wants but a few days of this wild weather
And hunger will make good the law's decree :
If not, for he may find some sustenance
In roots and woodland berries, your strict search
Will hunt him out and slay him secretly :
The hole where he shall rot will tell no tales.

AUXERRE. I fear the effect of this upon the people.

BISH. Leave it to me : the brief announcement made,
As of a thing that touches their old sins
Repented of and pardoned, dwelt upon
No more than serves to tell them the event,

I'll pass to other matter : give no time
For yeasty thought to swell their lumpish brains.
Yesterday's madness wrought in sight of all
We must undo, and in the selfsame place
Before the very eyes that witnessed it.
Will it please you call your daughter hither ?

AUX. Jarnac,
Summon the lady Ariane.

[*Exit JARNAC.*

BISH. My lord,
The spiritual father's task begins
When fleshly parents err ; and you shall see
How sweetly she will bend to discipline
Firmly but not unfeelingly enforced.
I will restore you an obedient child
And give a bride to Philip Chastellux.

AUX. The storm grows loud : hark, how the thunder
growls.

BISH. The voice of the Lord is in the waterfloods ;
The winds are angels of His wrath.

AUX. I pray you,
Be tender to my child.

BISH. Such tenderness
I'll use, my lord, as best consorts with wisdom
And her soul's health.

Enter ARIANE and JARNAC.

AUX. The pity she should need
Such bitter medicine ; drink of it so young.
But all our woes are by death's sufferance,
And we endure only till we are made
A thing too mean for grief.

ARIANE. You speak of death

Where many dead men lie unburied. Kill
Me too. Why should I linger out till day
These few dark hours, while the giant night
Wounded and gashed with angry lightning dies,
That I may see to-morrow light a world
New-trenched with graves, cumbered with mortal
heaps

That once were living men ?

BISH. Beseech you, lady,
Calm your tempestuous thoughts ; for you must hear
What must be said, however much I flinch
From my appointed task, in few brief words,
Sharp as the lightning ere the thunder rolls—
That Denys is no more.

[ARIANE swoons.

AUX. Bishop, I gave no warranty for this :
Poor child, poor child ! If I had had the time
I would have weaned thee, sweet, by slow degrees
From thy bad choice : and drop by drop have
poured
Into thy blood such blessed antidotes
As would have killed by gradual certain death
The poison lurking there : but now, had reason
The mastery of passion's eloquence,
It were of no avail. She's dead.

BISH. A swoon,
A swoon ! You talk too readily of death.
Jarnac, go call her women hither : tush !
A little water and a cordial,
A ribbon loosened and a lace untied,
And all will soon be well.

[Enter several women who carry away ARIANE, AUXERRE
and the BISHOP following.

ACT III

SCENE I

The market-place. Some of the niches in the Cathedral front are empty, and broken fragments of statuary lie strewn upon the ground. A few idlers are gathered in the square. Enter ORME and BASKERVILLE.

ORME. How say you, Baskerville? True verdict give ;

Was this the act of God ?

BASK. Why, to my thinking
The devil's in it when saints leave their niches
And turn to warlocks, dancing with the witches.

ORME. Truly, a question in theology
None but seraphic jurymen can solve.

BASK. Then bring it in as death by misadventure,
It were a scandal else. Here's Stephen's ribs
Complain of battery, and Barnabas
Cries out for plaster for a broken nose.

ORME. That will not serve ; for what can't be
Heaven's will

Satan must bear the blame of, Baskerville.

[IMOGEN, PETRONILLA, FRANCES and BLANCHE enter slowly, one by one. The Cathedral bell tolls.]

IMOGEN. How silent is the market-place ; how drear
The empty scaffold rising tier on tier !

No laughter now, no song ; no merry sound
Of trowel or the hammer's sharp rebound
Ringing upon the chisel ; but the knell
And solemn note of the slow funeral bell
That floats with laggard wing from tower to tower
As if the hand of death beat Time's last hour,
And nevermore should joyful peal be rung
Or sweet-toned chime.

PETRONILLA. Hark ! Oh, thou iron tongue,
Wail loud ! Thou can'st not utter half our woe.

BLANCHE. See ! Towards the chapter-house with
footstep slow
The canons cross the square.

[The clergy cross the Cathedral precincts.]

IMOGEN. Mass must be said
And solemn requiems chanted for the dead.

BASK. I came with a penny to purchase a mass ;
I came with my fortune to marry a lass ;
For where so well can a shepherd choose
As here in the market among the ewes ?

A VINEDRESSER enters excitedly.

VINEDRESSER. Hold, hold, my masters, give me leave
to speak !

You all have heard of famous Romanée,
Mother of grapes that make our noblest wine,
Pride of Auxerre : a storm of icy hail
Swept over it last night : and as I judge
Twelve acres will scarce yield the wealth of one.
The rich ripe clusters lie upon the ground
Mere food for grubs and worms. When you were
mad

I feared to speak, but now I boldly say,

You were bewitched, ay, one and all of you,
 By Denys l'Auxerrois. So fair they seem,
 These spirits can be mischievous : three years
 He wound his delicate snares about your feet,
 And sunned himself in favours : but now all's
 changed :

His fickle spirit veering like the wind
 Blows plagues upon you : first upon your lord
 He sends a moody madness craving blood,
 Then makes the slow-paced Yonne a roaring flood
 Filled with the sky's spent rage : while hail and rain
 Ravage the earth.

A CITIZEN. I partly think thee right—
 Unless it were God's vengeance—

VINEDRESSER. Did God urge
 Auxerre to murder ? Did He turn His hand
 Against His own house ; and from their holy seats
 Cast down these sculptured stones ?

BASK. The cloak is gone.

ORME. Mark that ; the cloak—

A CITIZEN. For sure the cloak can't lie.
 Who'd take it but himself that hung it there ?
 He's damned by that.

BASK. 'Tis plain as morning light.

ORME. Most swift conclusions : this at least is true,
 His mantle has not fallen on one of you.

[A COUNTRYMAN *pushes his way through the crowd
 which has rapidly grown denser.*

But who the devil's this ?

COUNTRYMAN. There's murder done
 At Angell's vineyard. Richard Angell's son
 Brained with a vineaxe, and the old man dead
 For sudden sorrow.

CITIZENS. The murderer ?

COUNTRYMAN. Unknown,
Nor any cause could prompt the crime ; ill will
Or quarrel there was none : there lies young Angell
His skull cleft through, the bloody axe beside him :
Else not a sign—

CITIZENS. Most strange !

VINEDRESSER. Ay, strange indeed,
Did we not know who was abroad last night
Upon the devil's errands. First by night
He prowls ; anon he'll brave the day : entice
The whistling schoolboy to the primrose wood
And leave him butchered ; stand beside the team
In some lone field and strike the ploughman down ;
Visit the woodman's solitary hut,
And stab the mother with her cradled babe.

[Enter bearers with a bier followed by an old man.]

IMOGEN. Ah me ! Ah me ! Death is not satisfied
With sending tidings merely, but is come
Himself into our midst.

OLD MAN. Set down the bier.
Come all of you and take your last farewell.
Doris is dead.

[He lifts the face cloth.]

With these white folded hands
She knit the cord that strangled her sweet breath.
Give me a handkerchief that I may wipe
The froth from her lips. There, there, she's comely
yet ;
A gentle lass to do so fell a deed.
But I thank God her lover lies stone dead,
An arrow through his heart—

ORME.

What? Young Peruse!

He should have bled to death upon love's knees,
Wrapped in his leopard skin. I have not come
So near to weeping since Cock Robin died.

IMOGEN. Peruse! Oh cruel hap! I could have spared
A dozen wiser heads for such a heart.

OLD MAN. I tell thee, lass, he's dead. And I pray God
He will o'ertake with such a bloody stroke
Denys that led them both astray. Take up
The bier: I'll make that prayer before the rood.

*[They move slowly in at the Cathedral door, bearing the
body and chanting as they go.]*

Oh, to think dull earth must press
That white bosom, veil those eyes,
Hiding all the loveliness

Of fresh fields and cheerful skies:

Oh, that suns must rise and set,
Light and shade each other chase,
When the morning dews are wet,

O'er the grass that hides thy face:
And the wandering mountain-bee,
Heard no more, draw near to thee,
Humming all the golden noon
To deaf ears his drowsy tune.

Softly, softly shall the snow
O'er thy grave her mantle throw,
When the winter nights are long
And 'tis dark at evensong.

SCENE II

The interior of the Cathedral: the bell still tolling.

DORIS' bier is stopped at the entrance. CANON,
OLD MAN, IMOGEN, BLANCHE, FRANCES, PETRONILLA
and a great crowd of people.

A CANON. It cannot be, the Church may not receive
The bodies of accursed self-murderers :
It is pollution, sacrilege ; instead
Of comfortable words such as are spoken
Above the dead whom God has summoned home,
Hide her in silence in the earth : no rite
Nor other office said save what the spade
Repeats with dismal stroke.

OLD MAN. It moves me not :
Take up the bier and let her be interred
Even as custom bids : were the whole volume
Of holy writ recited at her grave
It could not bring her back to life. O God !
Thou know'st the man whose evil influence
First led her from safe paths : even as the stake
Is driven through her breast, so may my spear
Pierce his : lengthen, I pray, my days for this ;
Or if that be not granted, let him fall
Into Thy hands, and spare him not, O God :
But all that makes Thee terrible, all pains
Wherewith Thou visitest the just and unjust,
The spite of accident, scourge of disease,
Whichever can inflict most grievous ill,
Fasten its tooth upon the finest nerve
Of his most vital essence, till his brain
Be wracked to madness—

The BISHOP and LORD AUXERRE have entered during the above and are followed by HERMES, PHILIP CASTELLUX and ARIANE who wears mourning ; a crowd of attendants behind.

BISH. Bid the bell cease ; let nave and choir be lit,
And burning tapers in each chapel set ;
'Tis strangely dark. Old man, your grief I know,
And I have heard your prayer : Almighty God
Hath answered it already : he is dead—

THE CROWD. Dead !

BISH. To the echo dead ! For last night's storm,
The wind above, the full-fed Yonne below
Roaring against the battlemented bridge,
Uprooted one huge pier, whose base—a boat
That stemmed with granite beak the running tide—
Forsook its moorings in the river-bed,
And the incumbent arch, a wreck of stones,
Fell ruining in the stream. Would you have proof ?
Go, of the broken parapet enquire,
Or from the flood that sweeps beneath it still
Gather your answer ; for its voice is loud.

Music and this chant.

Dark and stern
The river rolls,
Candles burn
For dead men's souls.
Lift not the pall,
Light not the shrine ;
Death ends all,
And no stars shine
When darkness thickens
And daylight sickens
Like a dying fire in a forest of pine.

BISH. Pardon, my lord Auxerre, if I have suffered
The solemn business that hath brought us here
To be interrupted thus : in this dark hour
When heaven still frowns, and fear, the child of
guilt,
Not yet baptized with the diviner name
Of penitence, desires but dare not ask
Pardon—that grace which we should beg in vain
But for the blood of Christ that purchased it—
Though on unfeigned repentance God bestows
Forgiveness, costliest of His gifts, and asks
No price except a broken heart : natheless,
Because prosperity tempts men to break
Strong oaths wrung from them in distressful days,
I much commend thy thought ; which is to seal
Even with thy child's virginity the bond
Newly contracted here 'twixt heaven and thee :
Thus is the past atoned ; the future pledged
To God. Shall it be so ?

AUX. Amen, my lord :

Come hither, Ariane.

I know thy heart of gold ; but it is soft
And easy wrought and melts with its own ardour.
It needs the alloy of sterner metal. Philip,
There's more of iron than of gold in thee ;
Therefore thou shalt be master in my house,
Ruler in this my state when I am gone,
Husband and lord of my dear daughter. Here
I plight you two in pledge of public weal
And private happiness : a line prolonged
By mixture of the noble blood that flows
In these two hands ; honour redoubled, wealth
And great estates enlarged—

ARIANE.

Among the dead

Oh, children, children, down upon your knees :
 Tear up these flagstones, leave not one unturned,
 Until the blessed Candida's remains
 Are on the great high altar laid to rest
 Within a shrine of purest crystal, framed
 In chiselled gold.

[The people begin tearing up the flagstones and exhuming the dead bodies. A solemn chant is heard to rise and clouds of incense roll down the Cathedral, mingling with the odours of the grave.]

Chant.

Oh, Time, whose waves have cast upon thy shore
 This mortal wreckage, rib and skull and bone,
 Why do thy tempests trouble them once more ?
 Let them alone !
 Fools ! fools ! Why batter at death's mouldering
 gates ?
 What secret think you lurks in the dark ground ?
 That which the living brain in vain debates
 Shall the dead expound ?
 Darkness and stench ; a night without a star :
 Of all thou hidest, death, is this the sum ?
 Alas ! thou can'st not hide the thing these are
 And we become—

AR. A hand ! A white arm through the incense cloud !
 It hovers like a cresset of pale fire ;
 Like fire it dies and glows again : it waves
 Me on—

HER. Pray God the maid be not distraught !

AUX. Come with me, daughter : home, come home,
 dear child—

AR. Look how it beckons me !

BISH. I see it not !

AUX. Nor I : nay, nay, believe it not, Ariane ;
It is a phantom of thine own sick brain,
That gathers substance from thy fevered speech ;
Shake but thy head at it ; swear 'tis not there ;
And it will straight be gone.

AR. See, see, it points
With downward gesture vehement, as if
It feared I should not understand : it moves
From arch to arch towards us ; now it hangs
Suspended in mid-air above our heads ;
And still with agitated motion flits,
Restless and full of dire significance.

THE CROWD. It is the arm of blessed Candida.

PET. It is the accusing hand of Denys come
To plague his murderers.

FRANCES. I welcome it
Whether it come in kindness or in wrath.
For 'tis a message from the spirit-world
And calls our souls above these ancient bones
And charnel-odours.

AR. It shines above us still
And as 'twould strike darts angrily : a hawk
Stoops so and poises o'er her cowering prey.
It moves away : down the dark nave it floats
And comes to rest above yon sepulchre carved
With the recumbent skeleton in stone.
Oh, follow it !

THE CROWD. To the Saint's tomb ! On ! On !

[*They all rush towards the tomb : as they approach the form of DENYS is seen to emerge : they make as if to seize him, but the hand, now plainly visible to all, waves them threateningly away. DENYS, with a yell of unearthly laughter, disappears into the twilight.*]

PHIL. Death to the sorcerer, death !

RALPH. Forwards or back,
However good my will, I cannot stir :
My feet are riveted as if in irons.

PHIL. The hand ! the hand ! Brave it who will, I
dare not.

So awful is its menace and so dread,
It waved me threateningly away. And now
It lingeringly fades.

RALPH. How think you, Sir,
Was this his ghost or was it flesh and blood,
And hath the Bishop lied ?

AR. Alas ! Alas !
That thou art given back to life to die !
Oh, I could find it in my heart to wish
That thou wert dead indeed ! Death sorts his
victims
And the hand points who shall die first.

Chant.

They rose, as if in mockery of their creed,
These sleepers ere the judgment-trumpet cried ;
A resurrection of the body indeed,
But not the body glorified.
Say, can this arm, brandished in ghostly feint
Above the doomed or guilty like a rod,
This spectre from death's famished world, content
The souls that weary for the living God ?

[The scene slowly closes.]

ACT IV

SCENE I

A place of tombs with a crucifix. Night.

Enter HERMES.

HERMES. Oh that I could recall that rash, blind
curse,

The voice of hate run mad ; but now become
A prophecy that swift events obey,

Closing upon their victim. On my knees
Help me pour out my soul in prayer, O God :

Let the strong effort rob me of my breath ;

Break me upon the wheel of anguish ; take

My life for his life and my soul for his.

O Will Supreme, will that this man shall live !

Oh, I am weak ; I have no power ; no voice ;

If Thou art dumb, he dies. Speak, Lord. To be

Estranged, disowned, cast off ; to grasp the void,

When we reach forth our trembling hands to Thee,

Is bitter death ; life hath no other ill,

And the whole world no woe save only this.

Then mock us not with phantom menaces

Unworthy Thee ; leave us not grovelling

Among dead bones to find some fragment out

That we may pin our faith to. Hush ! no sound ;

Silence is all the answer to my prayer,

Silence and gathering shade. Oh, let me die ;

Lift off life's insupportable burden ; take me
To Thee ; and let my body at Christ's feet,
A soldier at the gates he would have stormed,
Lie stretched out lifeless.

*[He throws himself on the ground before the crucifix.
DENYS in rags and almost naked emerges from among
the tombs.*

DENYS. Dead ! quite dead ! I knew it.
You see how these corpses follow me ; I'll lift him ;
He mustn't lie here by himself ; up there
Is pleasant company.

[He attempts to lift HERMES, who rises from the ground.

HER. Denys !

DENYS. Hush, monk ; it was not I that slew thee.
Seven devils—well, I can't remember all—
But murder was among them ; murder breaking
From the law's control ; that was the phrase ; I
hope
That there'll be no delay : they are kindly treated
After they're dead, and that must be my plea.

HER. Murder ! O God, the guilt be on my head ;
The doom hath fallen on him, the sin is mine.

DENYS. I love to move the noiseless mortised slabs
Upon their granite sockets and peep in :
Sometimes I set a little drowsy lamp
Winking in dun air warm with choking sand ;
Or knit a napkin round a chapfallen skull :
And then I see how Death hath trod the press,
His vats being full : ay, and fermenting too,
Just as they were on the Cathedral floor.

HER. Oh, horrible !

DENYS. But how they came to die

I cannot tell ; yet the whole world declares
 That it was I that slew them ; that can't be.
 I knew a man once who was much beloved :
 He had a flask ; a kind of talisman ;
 Some say he stole it from the Gergasenes ;
 Some that the youngest imp of vasty hell
 Steering his flight beyond the land of Punt,
 Where there's a temple dedicate to Death,
 Filched it away ; and to the sultaness
 Of Prester John for certain favours sold.
 At any rate the thing was full of death ;
 And people made a feast and drank of it,
 And that's how all the trouble first began :
 For he was haunted by a small brown owl,
 This merry fellow—he was merry once—
 Perched on his shoulder, pecking at his ear :
 At last it drove him mad ; and when he climbed
 The purple hills to hear the song of bees,
 Burying his face among the honied bells,
 The owl was there, and all the heather blazed,
 And singed him like hell-fire. Why, such a man
 Draws all the guilt of all the world upon him :
 And yet I hold the devils much to blame.

Seven devils : well, I'll take to keeping swine—

HER. Oh, God, he's mad ; unnerved ; hate has
 unhinged him ;—

His soul must stagger on through idiot dreams,
 And of its after-voyage to the grave

Can render no account ; unless God heal him—

DENYS. That cannot be ; for they have murdered
 Christ

And hung Him there. The nails are driven in ;
 But—that's the secret they won't have me tell—
 There's not a blue-eyed flower at His feet

That smiles the less : I think they mock at Him
Worse than the Roman soldiers.

HER. Come with me,
For I have much to tell thee of His Death—

DENYS. Yes, yes, we'll talk of death. Have you a
bone,
A bit of bone to hang about my neck ?
I should feel safer then ; more like the rest ;
They all wear bones since—

HER. Thou shalt have my habit,
Poor body stripped by madness of its dress ;
So under cloak of darkness we will go
To the good brothers of St. Germain's.

DENYS Ho !
I should love that : there of the bones of saints
I'll compound incense for the sanctuary.

HER. That thou shalt, brother. God shall visit thee ;
And give thee tender glimpses of His love
To prouder wits denied. Thou art a child
And as a child shalt enter heaven.

DENYS. Hist !
The sound of hoofs upon the flinty way.
I know the pale horse that Death sat upon
And Hell that followed with him.

HER. Hide thyself—

DENYS. They ride this way.

HER. Quick, quick, beseech thee, hide.

DENYS. No need ; I'll make myself invisible,
Then like a firefly I will glow again,
And lure them through the dark ; but when day
breaks

I'll quench my lamp, and like a long-legged grig
Chirp in the grass and jump upon their backs,
Now on, now off, while they lie foundering slow

In a deep bog ; I know the trick of it ;
'Tis merry sport.

HER. God send us merrier :
I fear you laugh too soon.

[*He hastily hides himself and* DENYS.

PHILIP *and* RALPH *ride in.*

PHIL. The very echo
And ghost of that demoniac laugh which rang
Through the Cathedral, when the frantic crowd
Stumbled on torn-up stones and half-fleshed limbs,
While the red sunset branded all with flame.
Good angels guard us, Ralph.

RALPH. Amen, my lord ;
But all the way from Julien-du-Sault
I'm troubled with a sweating of the palm,
And once or twice I thought I heard a wolf
Howl upwind in a folding of the down.

[*A wolf howls.*

PHIL. Listen ! The whining challenge warms my blood
That, I confess, this goblin-laughter chilled.
Come, tie our horses to the crucifix ;
So while we search they shall be safe from harm.
Werewolf or spectre, puck or leprechaun,
The hunt is up ; first we will search these tombs,
And then the yews beyond.

[*The horses are tied. Exeunt PHILIP and RALPH searching the ground in different directions. Then re-enter RALPH leading DENYS cowed and followed by HERMES.*

RALPH. I thank the Lord I've found this holy man,
As good a hound to set upon the trail

As ever devil-hunter could desire.
I'll blow my horn and call his lordship back ;
Here is a brace to try a cast withal.

[*He blows his horn ; its echoes among the rocks are prolonged by DENYS in peals of unearthly laughter.*

God save us ! I've the devil by the sleeve
And took him for a monk : I'd liefer walk
Naked through nettles than play hide-and-seek
With hermits in the dark.

Re-enter PHILIP.

PHIL. Whom hast thou here ?
Why dost thou blow thy horn ?

HER. This anchorite
Dwelling in tombs with penitence and prayer,
Wild roots and berries his sole sustenance,
Is become crazed, and fills the hollow rocks,
That used to echo to his holy psalms,
With witless laughter.

PHIL. Who art thou that speakest ?

HER. One that hath many things to repent of.

PHIL. Ay,
So have we all. But art thou of our country ?

HER. A stranger and a sojourner—

PHIL. The moon
Breaks in a fit of anger from the clouds
To smite the lie upon thy forehead, monk.
I know thee ; thou art Hermes. Ralph, make haste ;
Unhood that madman ; let me see his face.

[RALPH *removes* DENYS' hood.

DENYS. Said I not so ? I know that this is death ;
I fled from him before : but now he's come

To take me prisoner ; and welcome kindly,
Good my lord Death.

PHIL. Ay, death for thee indeed ;
Wretch, are thy vile enchantments come to this
That thou must screw thy face to an idiot's mask
And smile upon the moon ? Thou can'st not smile
Pity into my soul. Those are the lips
That cast infection on the unbreathed glass
Of my love's chastity ; that uttered words
To deepen the pale rose upon her cheek ;
Those are the eyes that stole unlawful looks.
Filth, had'st thou dared no more than to admire,
As a slave may his mistress, thou had'st died.

HER. In truth, my lord, in truth his wits are fled.
He is no more—to my sorrow be it spoken—
Than a poor helpless madman.

PHIL. Evil beast !
If I forbear to slay thee where thou art
As lawfully I might, 'tis not thy madness
Saves thee ; I spare thee now that thou may'st die
Before a thousand witnesses, God's curse
Blinding thy dazzled wits ; and no lean beasts
With famished whine shall fawn upon thee then,
But flames shall lick thee with their burning tongues ;
Thy limbs shall drop from thee like melting lead
Even at the ladder's foot they scaled so fast.
Come, bind him, Ralph, and fling him on thy horse.

[*They bind DENYS, tie him to RALPH'S horse and ride away.*]

HER. Ah, God, I leave it unto Thee : Thou knowest
How my whole frame is one incarnate prayer
That Denys may have life and life indeed.
Thine is the kingdom, Lord : Thy Will be done,

Pity is none in these hard human hearts.
Oh, blessed dark enfold me here : sweet death,
Wrap me in dreamless sleep ; wipe from my thoughts
The nightmare of my days.

[He casts himself on the ground and the scene closes.]

SCENE II

The market-place at night. PETRONILLA and BLANCHE.

BLANCHE. Sad Autumn wanes apace ; and we who
sighed

At his approach must weep to watch him go.
Weed fires burn and berries ripen red ;
The northern wind blows coldly from the downs
And there's a bite of winter in the sky.
Heigho !

PET. That spinning top that hummed his silly tune
Here in the market-place a while ago
Spoke true : the chestnut leaves lie on the ground,
And in the cloisters the old vine is dead.

BLANCHE. Oh where is Denys ? Shall we search
these glooms ?

Perhaps he lingers here in loneliness,
Perhaps he's safe among the hills, or Yonne
Down her dark reaches rolls him to the sea.

PET. Footsteps approach. Sister, creep home with
me ;

And warm thy sad thoughts at a cheerful fire.

Enter ORME and BASKERVILLE.

ORME. Sweet birds of night, whither away so late ?

BASK. Tuwhoo ! my pretties, can't you find a mate ?

ORME. What think you of Sir Baskerville the Bold ?
 A perfect gentle knight, and nothing old ;
 For who loves wine and women, by God's truth,
 His is the blessing of perpetual youth.

BASK. Oho ! Oho ! I love them so,
 To the devil with me I'd have them go.

BLANCHE. Come, Petronilla.

PET. Out, you drunken wretch !

BASK. Out, drunken wretch ! Good Lord, you've
 much to learn.

ORME. A court of love where each shall rule in turn
 Is just the kind of school you need to teach
 Less rustic manners and more pleasing speech.
 I know a way to hold a pretty court ;
 Kisses, not mottoes, shall provide the sport.

PET. You blear-eyed satyr ; get you from my sight.

BASK. Softly, my maid, my little Shunamite.
 When King David was old and his blood ran cold
 And he lay like a corpse in bed,
 For he gat no heat from blanket or sheet,
 They sent for his leman instead.
 What, going, sweethearts ? How if these blear eyes
 Had chanced see clearer than the gentle spies
 That search for their lost leveret two and two,
 As pretty falcons as ere Cupid flew ?
 What payment for the good old man who tells
 The secret hiding-place where Denys dwells ?

PET. Gold for his purse ; and rich wine for his
 throat

Chainette—migraine—a hogshead if he will—

BASK. Why, as for money I'll not take a groat ;
 And wine won't tempt me—

BLANCHE. Pray, good Baskerville,
 What would'st thou ?

BASK. That which thou hast oft bestowed
Unasked upon this Puck of thine—

PET. Thou toad,
Thou dragger of thy belly in the dirt,
Whose knees are crooked elbows ; would'st thou
squirt

Thy venom on this spotless flower of grace ?
Out, roundbacked reptile ; out, thou baggy face :
Thou creeping newt ; thou pike whose tettered skin
Is scaled with every evil itch of sin ;
Nibble not here, thou fish ; I'd rather see
A leper hang upon her lips than thee.

ORME. Ay, hang's the word ; heels up, heads down,
no matter ;

'Tis no use waiting till a thief gets fatter.
Your hardened sinner ere his heart grows harder
Grows wondrous tender in a great man's larder.
Why, down at Chastellux I've seen a score
Like kites and weasels nailed to a barndoor.
My lord is his own warrener and snares
This kind of lousy rogue as boys do hares,
Mostly 'twixt dark and dawn : and yet he'll find
He can't keep secrets from the tell-tale wind,
That will be babbling to the pies and crows,
And hath scant reverence for a lady's nose.
' Buzz,' quoth the fly nor fear nor shame prohibit ;
' God bless this curl-pate gipsy on his gibbet.'
All Thy works praise Thee : even flies say grace
Before they picnic on a dead man's face.

PET. Blasphemous liar ! Oh that these stones would
gape

And earth might gulp thee down.

ORME. A pretty scrape
You'd have me in like Dathan and Abiram !

And all because, howe'er I may desire 'em,
Kisses withheld and pailfuls of abuse—

PET. A toothsome wash to pour about thine ears,
Thou hog—

ORME. Can't make me niggard of my news.

PET. The devil drive thee to his sty—

ORME. My dears,
Denys is— (*he makes a sign at his throat*).

PET. Lies ! more lies !

ORME. Or if not quite,
Such respite as may serve to bleed him white
Is all that he or you can hope for ; damme,
A dying lecher's kisses are but clammy ;
But none disputes 'em : they are all your own :
Make haste : there's time to halve his latest groan.

PET. Nay, nay, sweet Blanche : believe it not : I
know

God will not suffer him to perish so :
He's safe from all the hellish, hunting crew,
In some dark grove of ilex or of yew ;
Bright thoughts are his, swift as the upland breeze
That settles for a moment where it please
And then is gone again on happy wings.
Birds are his friends, and gentle, large-eyed things,
Fawns with their dams, and stags at evening stand
And with their rough tongues lick his brinish hand.
He's brother to the wolf and to the bear ;
The watchful lynx stands sentry o'er his lair ;
And vernal woods must first forget to bud
Ere they betray their nursling's solitude.

ORME. Oh, that's a trick that's soon forgot ;
The dead leaves fall, the fallen rot ;
And soon the autumn woods will be
As bare as is the gallows-tree.

Hark, what a knocking at the gate !
Who's this comes riding in so late ?
He's one of those that seek their prey
'Twixt set of sun and dawn of day.

[Enter RALPH ; he dismounts and leads his horse to a fountain.

BASK. Huntsman, what cheer ?

RALPH. There, drink thy fill, poor beast !
A two-mile burst with Satan holster-wise
Tied to the pummel. Heard you ere the like ?
But for the wolves I'd have unstrapped him here,
And led him like a tame bear through the town.

ORME. What ? Satan, huntsman ?

RALPH. Call him what you will :
The devil's in him : tie him up with thongs :
He'll whistle on the wolves to set him free.

PET. He speaks of Denys—Denys—he is found.

RALPH. Ay, in a place of tombs, my girl. At first
He played the madman. Mad ? He'd wits enough
To call the wolf-pack after him. At last
Seeing that they would either have my life
Or his, I cut the straps and let him go.
But mark what followed. Straight the wolf-pack
stopped,
And I drew rein : for wonder cast out fear ;
And turning on my saddle I beheld
A grey, lean-bellied bitch that licked his face
And swollen, clammy hands : with loving tooth
Gnawing his leathern bonds ; then, instantly,
In likeness of a wolf-cub at her chin
He leapt, and puppy-like ran by her side.
Wild were the yellings of the demon pack,

And the witch moon looked down upon the world.
But I rode on and straightway told my lord.

ORME. What said lord Philip ?

RALPH. First he raged and swore ;
Doubted my word and came about to slay me ;
But when I offered to return with him,
He shook his bridle rein, and spurred his horse :
' If the wolf-fiends steal not his soul to-night
Or make a meal upon his flesh,' quoth he,
' I'll try a cast of bloodhounds in these woods
And he shall hang to-morrow by the neck.'
So if he lives he dies, and if he's dead
The better for us all. Come, Traveller ;
I'm for the Shoes.

[Exit, leading his horse.]

PET. Sweet sister, weep not. I have still some hope
To cheat the wolf's maw and the tyrant's rope.
Men at the fount of grief their tears renew ;
May not immortal hearts have pity too ?
O dark and star-sown veil ! O deeps of air
Strewn with dead wings of unavailing prayer,
And Thou that dwell'st beyond ! the occasion take
And show Thy power for Thine honour's sake.
Shut the wolves' mouths and through the darkness
guide

My feet to Denys on the mountain-side,
And give him love and life and liberty :
But if no human cry may reach to Thee,
And there's no heart that beats beyond the stars,
But dumb, blind force waging insensate wars,
Vast, purposeless, like arms of some huge mill
That must obey the winds' imperious will,
Whose millstones are the pitiless fates that grind
The blood and brains and hearts of humankind,

Till in the agony shriek follows shriek
And that which seems a soul begins to speak,
Where death's blind darts rain thickest let me be
And run to meet the bolt not launched at me.

[*Excunt* PETRONILLA and BLANCHE.

ORME. Oh ! what a sad example when she prays :
Oaths are petitions fallen on evil days ;
First, meek and mannerly : a few reverses
Curdle the milk of prayer into curses.
Laugh, devil, laugh ; at Charity's debate
Outcrops the ugly scum of human hate,
And when by malice led my lies I strew
God takes especial pains that they come true.

[*Excunt.*

SCENE III

The hills : dawn. BLANCHE, FRANCES, IMOGEN,
PETRONILLA.

One sings drowsily.

Feed us with dreams, O god discrowned,
Where winter's frozen shadows creep ;
No garlands round our temples bound,
Our heavy limbs benumbed with sleep.
Still are the feet so fast that flew,
Our garments stiff with hoary dew ;
Feed us with dreams.

[*They sleep.*

Enter HERMES and DENYS.

HER. Poor children ! Like a bed of flowers they lie
Bowed by the heavy thunderdrops to earth,
Their sweet stems snapped, their petals stained with
clay.

Tread softly ; wake them not ; let them sleep on :
 They must not open those grief-darkened eyes
 To blacker woe. Come, Denys.

PET. (*starting from sleep*). Wake, oh, wake !

Ah, God, I dreamed that our lost love passed by—

[*They all start up. DENYS turns and looks at them :
 they shrink back in horror.*

HER. Ay, this is he, this also God permits,
 And draws him to Himself down darkened ways
 That the great light may shine upon him : takes
 His reason captive to redeem his soul.

BLANCHE. Ah, God ! (*She hides her face in her hands.*)

FRANCES. I never looked on wretchedness
 Till I beheld that face. Oh, misery,
 Would he, would all of us, were dead and cold !

PET. Pitiful heaven ! look not so strangely on us :
 Speak to us, Denys—

DENYS. What ! are these maskers here
 Without their rags ? That's more genteel, and fits
 Their lineage well, for they are all Death's daughters,
 Unvizored now and featured like their sire.
 Oh, laughable the clumsy tramp of limbs
 Rounded with flesh : so boors keep holiday
 Heaving gut-loaded gambols at a fair.
 And then the sweat that must be wiped away ;
 The retchy lip-work ; oh, the grossness of it ;
 Lips are but kitchen-wenchs, greasy too,
 That serve the belly with its meat and drink.
 But, look you, I'm for the charnel house.

HER. Even so
 His mind runs on mortality and death :
 But where the brethren of my order dwell
 Divinest pity shall restore his wits.

PET. No, no : the woods and hills shall be his refuge
And we his tender nurses : your cold cloister,
Where the sad echo of sepulchral stones
Cries out to footfalls of the living dead,
Will kill him quite : lay him upon the turf,
And the wise, silent hours with holy balm
Shall stoop from heaven to heal him.

IMOGEN. Sister, peace.

The sun and rain can never kiss him back
To gentle reason and calm thoughts—

DENYS. Away !

The revellers are met : the dance begins :
Be frolicsome, each dainty Adam's rib,
Gleesome and nimble as dead autumn leaves.
Clatter me here, hip, shank and hollow thigh,
And chin to chin scrape many a bony kiss,
While thin winds snatching at the sky-hung bells
Toll you through wet woods till the sun drops down.

[He moves slowly away with HERMES.]

ACT V

SCENE I

Auxerre Castle. AUXERRE, ARIANE, HERMES.

AUX. How long am I to wait for thine assurance ?
Tell me this ghost of unregenerate earth
Haunts thee no more.

AR. I cannot to ease thy soul
Burden mine own with falsehood.

AUX. Then he lives,
And thou art still his lover, comfortest him
With secret hope.

AR. I swear this is untrue.
Denys is set apart for sacrifice,
Not for the love of mortal woman. Dead
Or living he must hold upon his way
Alone, no woman clinging to his feet.
Now all things dwindle in the vast of death
That dwarfs death's self, and death and life and love
Shrink to the compass of this brief black day.

AUX. This bitter-hearted fruit has quite destroyed
All taste and natural appetite for life :
Is there no cure for such a malady ?

HER. My lord, I know but one man in the world
Who under God might pour in oil and wine
And heal these wounds.

AUX. Let him be sent for, then.

HER. He may not quit our convent ; by strict vows
Confined within its walls : but if it please you
To send your daughter thither, counsel sweet
And solemn consolation she shall hear.

AUX. Go, Ariane ; submit yourself to him ;
God hath destroyed and blasted with a curse
The city of your sojourn ; look not back
On peril of your soul : there, kiss me, child.
How like a shrunken river runs our blood
Narrowed and dwindled to the compass small
Of thy young veins. Then let it not be lost
In rocky passages and barren sands,
But nourish in its course full-flowing streams.
Doth not the Bishop bless the bridge to-morrow ?

HER. My lord, it was determined so.

AUX. Why then
In token of old sins now done away
I'll see these new foundations wisely laid.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

*A large bare room in the monastery of St. Germain ;
an organ to which DENYS is giving the finishing
touches stands on one side. HERMES.*

HER. I think this fear hath fallen from thee, friend ;
The darkness lifts : we have had woeful cause
To grieve and pray for thee : thanks be to God
That He hath heard our intercessions—

DENYS. Hermes,
Madness is not so terrible as to stand
Upon the dreadful brink : to grasp the weapons

That should have armed the mind against itself,
And feel them break even in the downward stroke,
Turning to serpents.

HER. Let these dark thoughts sleep :
Thou need'st not fear rebellion any more,
Nor those insurgent fancies streaming in
That stunned thy reason ; God hath made thee whole.

DENYS. Yet I shall never wear my mind again
A seamless garment : Hermes, I am changed.

HER. As after sickness changed, but not transformed.

DENYS. Changed or transformed I know not : I have
trod

The vacant streets and silent, stony squares
Which are the grey metropolis of death ;
The chilly dust of sunless labyrinths,
Stirred as with naked feet ; yea, knocked in vain
Upon the massy barriers of death :
There's nothing graven on them ; even now
Embalméd memory crumbles back to dust,
And only dust remains.

HER. The air which builds
The blood and tissues makes a dust of death
And shows it a mere ruin. This is well ;
I count it as a sign of health.

DENYS. I am
Like an adventurer, who hath wandered long
And lost his memory among unknown shores ;
And when men ask of him to make report
What manner of country and what folk were there,
Can only say that it was desolate,
A wreck of heaven, a wreck of earth ; rent clouds,
Torn by fierce winds that seemed to shake the stars,
Blown wastes and dunes and solitary meres.
It is the madman's lot that he brings back,

Nor news, nor riches, nor fresh knowledge. I
Have been where I know not ; and yet methinks
Could I have wandered there and kept my wits
I could have told strange tales.

HER. So stars are banished to the ends of space
And so return, revisiting the world,
And bring no tidings with them.

DENYS. I should have sunk,
Gone on for ever sinking through the void,
While the eternal surges dinned mine ears,
But that an air which had its birth in heaven,
As musical as brooks in Eden's bowers,
Flowed through my dreams and comforted my feet
When they were far astray, leading me back
With gentle modulations clear and strong.

HER. Yonder is the ark,
Stored with all sweets that can delight the soul,
To which thy spirit like the homing dove
Returns in peace ; a mighty instrument,
With stops and keys and passages for thunder.
This is thy handiwork ; 'tis thou did'st teach
These pipes to warble with their reedy tongues,
And hum and throb and wail to thy moved soul.
And yet how meagre was thy first attempt,
And even that reckoned a turning point
In thy disease. Most painfully at first
Groping among the dead thy days were passed ;
And ever where the funeral-bell was rung
Or grave new-digged within these cloistered grounds
Thy footsteps bent that way. Heaven pitied thee
And, though thy speech was frozen and thy face
Set in a marble sorrow, by degrees
Thou did'st at length make friends with happier
thoughts ;

Pleased with the moonlight on the frozen snow,
And pleased to wander by the river bed,
The marshy creeks and silent wintry pools,
And rills that lose themselves in fenny meads
Among the rushes where the wild swans nest.
The reeds that thou did'st shape, set to thy lips
Cried like the bird which, wheeling nearest Heaven,
Screams sharpest pain, a still repeated woe,
Monotonous and desolate, without hope.
Then thou would'st fling the instrument away,
Call it a piece of poisonous honeycomb
Filled full of bees that stabbed thee with their
stings.

Alas, poor soul, the sting was in thy heart :
'Twas there the poison lurked ; and the weak straws
Gave anguish its keen tones.

And now there's nothing that can touch the soul,
Nor deep, nor height, but finds a language here :
The shout of metal trumpets pealing loud
Like angels when the Omnipotent they acclaim,
Oboe and clarion, flute and bassoon ;
And that still voice to which no answer comes
The wail of sorrow, trembling on till death.

DENYS. No, there's no answer. What can the unborn
know

Of life, to them a mystery unpierced ?
So is the grave to us that draw this breath.
If I could strike a chord that should express
The groaning and the travailing of the world
And hold it on until the end of time,
There still would be no answer. As the tide,
Ebbing and flowing in uneasy quest,
Gains what it loses, loses what it gains,
So are the searchings of the heart of man.

The old, glad gods are silent and the New
Is mortal anguish deified in death.
No, no ; no answer ; there's no Dweller there
In the eternal dark ; no gospel then
Shall wake to triumph or endure defeat,
When the night comes on which no morning breaks.
Faith is the rusty armour heroes wore
Which after death serves but to deck their graves.
We are as young leaves on an ancient tree,
And new and old are fed by one dark earth
And thither must return. Oh, happy woods,
Submissive to the variable sky,
Sunshine and glittering raindrop and dark storm,
Let me abide with you the appointed hour,
Give me your sweet content, yea, with that touch
That bids you mingle undismayed with earth.
'Tis but an accident of heat or cold
That spring revives you here ; but there are climes
Where the sun's bounty waxes not nor wanes
But feeds all seasons with an equal power :
There is no expectation of the spring
Nor fear of death nor hope beyond the grave.
You would not have a coward in your midst,
A traitor too. I cannot say your prayers
Nor chain me with your vows : your clanging bells
Madden my soul, and your intoned griefs
Are like the gnashings of the damned in Hell.
Shall hares and linnets have the heart to range
Where hawks and eagles prey, and I lie hid
For fear of death entombed in a living grave ?
The path men trod with me was bright with flowers,
With vineyards clustered ; rhythmic with the beat
Of dancers, and the pleasant country flowed
With milk and honey ; not the tasteless sort

Thy Canaan proffers : men could crush the grapes
 Against their palates and the milk was sweet,
 Not soured with meditation ; they reached forth
 Bold hands to take the honey, tremulous
 With no sick sense of guilt that makes each taking
 Seem like a theft. Hermes, thou hast given me love,
 Prayed for me, wept for me ; yea, sweated blood
 In anguished intercession ; yet we stand
 As far apart as truth from error ; God
 Knows where the truth and where the error lies.
 Time and eternity : I will not be
 The fool to lose them both ! Back to the woods,
 The fields and fells, the brooks and running streams !
 Mists hide me ! Rivers hush me ! Winds and clouds
 My pilots be ! Spirits of earth and fire,
 Echoes and leafy whispers, silences
 That dwell in caves, or haunt majestic slopes
 Bare to the sky, be of my fellowship,
 Give me for bride the shade that veils her face
 In forests unprofaned.

[He turns as if to go out, not perceiving ARIANE, who is ushered in by a brother of the convent.]

AR. I pray you, father,
 Where is the man whose counsel I'm to hear ?
 HER. Dear lady ! I have given you to drink
 The bitterest cup of all.

[He hides his face and bows his head.]

AR. (*perceiving* DENYS). Denys ! Dear God !
 I thank Thee, oh, how fervently for this !
 Beloved ! Oh, had they prevailed ; made me
 So far unfaithful as to think thee dead !
 Away ! The thought of it is as a gulf,

A whirling gulf that draws me to its depths
To drown me in despair !

DENYS. I would to God—

O Death that cam'st so near, yet missed thy mark—

AR. Love, when Death strikes he cannot aim so false
But he shall hit us both.

DENYS. A vow's a vow,

And there are some that only death may cancel—

AR. If—but thou hast not— Oh, I fear the truth
Not the false hint that hides it—dar'st thou, Denys,
Look me in the eyes and say thou art a monk
Vowed from the world, from life and love ?

DENYS. Yea, vowed
To death.

AR. Ah, gentle heart, my hunted one ;
Thou shalt belong to Dian's herd, and none
Shall dare to do thee harm.

DENYS. I am alone

In midst of nothingness : to be alone
Is dreadful ; but to be alone and find
The vastness empty, without God or love !
Oh heart, heart, heart, where are the rubies gone,
The flawless gems glistening in golden sands ?
Is nothing left but this thrice-sifted dirt,
The dross and dregs of life ?

AR. All-healing love,
Quick, with thy balm anoint his failing eyes,
Ere all grow dim and lustreless.

DENYS. No God ;
No love. I thought that love was fair ;
But where's the amaranth to bind her brows
And keep her from mortality and change ?
All the enchantresses to which men kneel
Enslave their souls. What is it makes us proud ?

A golden eagle floating in the sun—
But climb the cliff, and in the eagle's nest
Where he sat brooding 'mid the thunder-bolts,
There's nothing but foul bones.

AR. O short-lived love, be changed to something fair
If thou must die ; and do not leave behind
The cold and pulseless corpse of passion dead,
When the touch thrills not, nor the voice endears,
And there's no vision for the unkindled eye !
It is enough ; I see thee in the flesh ;
I know that mine own love is changeless. Were
Thy body sick would I not make thee well ?
If thou wert dead and all my world grew dark,
Above doom-boding clouds my star of love
Would create light anew ; tarnish the moon
And make her frozen ashes pale and ghast
As the wan beams of fading memory.
Then where's the balm shall heal thy wounded soul
But the unsullied stream that brims with love ?
See, if I draw this breath, if blood flows here,
These are but witnesses of living love,
From my heart's beat your own shall catch love's
tune,

My lips give yours the breath that is love's soul.

DENYS. No : let me toss no more on that wild sea,
The still unsated, savage element
Of salt desire. I hunger, but for bread
Divine : I will not mate with aught that wears
The badge of sex : this brand that through the flesh
Bites deep and sears the soul of all her slaves.
There is a fountain welling in the sand ;
There is a shade that overhangs the pool,
And there are clouds and silence—

[DENYS goes out, leaving ARIANE weeping.]

HER.

Let them flow.

This is thine hour of weeping : but for him
What tears ? The grayest daughter of despair,
His bride that he hath chosen instead of thee,
Freezes their fount and will not let them fall.
And as the slave, deep in the embowelled mine,
Hews into thicker darkness stroke by stroke,
So his lost soul.

AR.

O God, if he should run

Into some dreadful danger ! Follow him !

This is no time to sit and wring the hands

And beat the breast. Away !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III

The Underworld. Wind and Darkness. DENYS dreams.

DENYS. Down, down ; still down through never-
ending night,

Accumulated darkness, shade on shade,
And winds that blow from uncreated time
The barren blasts of death ! Have mercy, God !
If there be mercy in these elements,
Or any God where only ruin dwells,
And faiths are dust whirled in the track of years
Whose atoms choke my nostrils. All the woe
Of all the ages seizes on my brain
And will not let me die.

The form of NEPHTHYS looms up in the darkness.

NEPHTHYS. Lo ! I am she that swalloweth them all,
The comely gods and faiths whereon were stayed

Man's timid childhood, his adventurous prime.
 Where Bel and Nebo stooped, the Name of Names,
 Jehovah, awfulest of shapes, bows down,
 Creeping phantasmal into my cold womb,
 With Isis, Horus, Astaroth and Jove.
 The wind, the desert and the dark remain,
 And these are mine : my kingdom nothingness,
 And I the barren Venus of the dead.
 For all the spawn of mind—the gods and creeds—
 Perishes, whelmed in my most bitter sea.
 But since mind made them, mind may still restore
 The shapes of its created deities,
 And in the light of madness dream old dreams.

BUDDHA *appears.*

BUDDHA. Would'st follow me? Know, my reward is death.

For not to be were best : touch not, taste not,
 Hear not, see not : in the vile mart of sense
 Have thou no commerce ; there is none good, not
 one :

Worm, beast or man ; whatever flesh approves,
 Refrain : the years, the seeming endless years
 Shall pass ; the myriad pulses shall be still,
 And thou be thou no more : the scattered dust
 Is blown along the windy ways, and sinks
 To rest at last.

[The phantom sinks and another arises.]

MAHOMET. There is one God alone,
 All-merciful, almighty and all-wise.
 I, Mahomet, am his prophet : I, who felt
 God's hand upon my shoulder chill my heart,
 And turned the rein of Borak back to earth.

Awake, awake, Islam ! Why art thou strong ?
Why are thy horses swift, thy swordblades keen ?
Give me a bunch of dates, a bowl of milk,
A thousand scimitars : I will o'erleap
The gates of Paradise, and, looking down
Upon the blackened cities thick with dead,
Die, if immortal souls can die, of bliss,
Upon a Houri's bosom ! God is great !

[He vanishes and a third apparition appears.]

ADAM. I am the dust wherein the Lord God breathed
The breath of life ; for whom the garden rose
Of Eden, watered by the fourfold stream ;
And of my rib the comely Eve was made.
I heard the voice of God in kindness once
And once in awe ; for disobedience
We were thrust forth, lest we should eat the fruit
That hangs upon the tree of life and live
For ever. Dust thou art and unto dust
Shalt thou return. The mouth of God hath spoken.

[He fades and a fourth apparition rises.]

JOB. The curse of God pronounced on Adam's seed
Fell on my soul ; the thistles and the thorns ;
The sweat, the sorrow, the unheeded tears ;
Until I loathed my life and digged for death
As men for hidden treasure. My complaint
God heard, and from the whirlwind made reply,
Reciting all the wonders of His Hand ;
The ordinances of heaven, night and day,
The constellations and the fruitful clouds,
Earth and the secret fountains of the sea :
Yea, and the wonder of the mind of man,
Wisdom and knowledge that in darkness end.
Lightning and thunder, rain and ice and snow,

Behemoth and leviathan, all beasts
 That range the mountain, bird and fish and worm,
 Contended in rebuke. I bowed my head ;
 But none of these, nor God Himself rolled back
 The gates of death ; and I am as the wind,
 The wasted clouds, the groaning of my breath,
 Long stilled ; my tears long mingled with the sand.

[He disappears.]

DENYS. Oh that my spark were quenched ; that I
 lay still,
 My breath departed from me ; and my brain
 Filled with the dust and darkness of the grave.
 Then should my heart have rest, nor any shock
 Of fear or hope, nor throb of joy have power
 To shake me more. The small and great are there ;
 The sinner and the just, the bond and free :
 A place of quiet ; desolate ; a sleep
 In the eternal dark.

[There is total darkness and silence and then a Voice.]

THE WORD. I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he
 that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet
 shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth
 in Me shall never die.

DENYS. Lord, let me come to Thee : more near—more
 near—

Oh, lift me from this never-ending doom ;
 The gulf is deep, and God, that dwells in all,
 His presence to this eddying death denies :
 Saviour !

[The winds cease and all is calm and motionless.]

A long pale line of sickly light
 Lowers in the east beyond the stony hills ;
 And there the legions of the risen dead

That died since Adam trespassed, motionless,
Wrapped in their cerements, kneel beneath dark
clouds.

There is a hill—a green hill far away—
Oh Blood of Christ ! whatever streams run dry,
Thou through the endless ages flowest still.
Oh Son of God ! Oh Sacrifice Divine !
Oh Sacred Heart broken with grief for me !

[He falls on his face ; the last scene of the crucifixion is enacted, and as the last cry from the Cross rings through the silence all is swallowed up in darkness.]

NEPHTHYS. Thou too, mysterious Sufferer, descendest
In the deep shades of dubious night involved.
Faiths perish, but my kingdom shall endure ;
Like an encroaching tide my darkness grows,
Fed with meek earth and tributary heaven.
Oh, miserable babyhood of man,
Rocked on Fate's bony knees 'twixt joy and fear
And fed with hunger ; how long will ye love
To be deceived, and gamble with the hope
Of immortality ? As if the voice
Of trembling terror, crying ' Death is dead,'
Could rend truth's veil of darkness and let in
The cheerful, lying day. All your vain brood
Sinks in the waves of my unfathomed sea.

[At last daylight returns and discloses the country of Auxerre : the city in the distance ; the broad river close at hand. Upon its bank DENYS lies, and, a little way off, stand HERMES and ARIANE.]

DENYS (*starting to his feet*).

Death, art thou vanquished here, or vanquisher ?
Remotest ages by that cry appalled,
Shall weep and wonder. Oh, it darkens death !

Yet of that thought I perish : life, more life !
 And where is life save in the faith of Christ ?
 Redeemer ! Whose despair is our sole hope !
 Reach down Thine arms and lift me to Thy cross !
 Nail there my feet so that they shall not stray !
 There is no death save sin ; no life but love ;
 And love is pain and sacrifice. Run, run !
 This monstrous earth rises in endless peaks,
 And all the mountain-ranges of the world
 Rear their huge crests and roaring topple down,
 A stony welter of enormous waves ;
 But though they heap themselves upon my head
 And grind me into dust, the dust shall cry
 To its Creator, and the souls in prison,
 Their mortal fetters dark with ageless rust
 Struck from their limbs, come forth—Love shall do
 this :

These moving worlds that from their roots upturn
 Satan hath launched against my naked soul
 Love shall surmount—through Faith. Oh ! Lead
 me on ! *[Exit.*

HER. Possessed, convulsed, tormented, blind, distraught,

Insane with madness more divine than sense,
 He rushes towards the city : crackling flames
 Seem from the fissured earth to lick his feet,
 And bladed lightning flashes round his head.
 Daughter, we must not leave him.

AR. I am faint ;
 The hope I had hath suffered dissolution,
 My joy gives up the ghost. He goes to death
 And whither shall I go ?

HER. Poor child ! Poor child !

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV

The same, but nearer to the city. A leper sits crouched in his white robes, snaring birds.

LEPER. The breast of a linnet, the tongue of a lark,
The throat of a nightingale,
The gill of a toadstool fleshed in the dark,
And the tender steak of a snail;

Oh, these make a dish that is dainty sweet
For the tooth of a royal king :

Ho ! ho ! little lark, thou art leper's meat
That at Heaven's gate didst sing !

[He lets the cord go and rises to gather the birds.

One ! two ! three ! Set the trap again.

Water ; wood ; fire. Come ; come. I'll go gather
nettles.

I have no ground to dig or sow,
For Adam's curse I care not ;
The leaf above, the root below,
Are mine to take and spare not.

Man's proper diet, reckoned good
Ere Death became a glutton,
And Noah afloat upon the flood
Perforce ate beef and mutton.

[He moves slowly away searching for herbs.

Enter DENYS.

DENYS. Lord, make the altar ready : I am here :
Strike ; let them hew me branch by branch from life,

Or, if it please Thee, bid the roaring flames
 Roast this loathed flesh, once, as Thy temple,
 fair,
 But now corrupt. Accept the offering
 And make it worthy Thee : else vile indeed !
 Through clash of axes ; through the bright, quick
 tongues
 Of gasping fire my freed soul ascends !
 Oh, how I pant to feel the ecstasy,
 The utter bliss of anguish unassuaged !
 Thy bosom, Lord ! Thou wilt not turn me back
 Though long with carnal appetites defiled !
 Let me not suffer that supremest pang—
 Shuddering, to hear the sentence unrevoked,
 The horror of Thy final, blasting curse :
 ‘ Depart from me, ye wicked, I never knew ye.’

[He pauses exhausted.]

LEPER (*advancing*).

Here's one that looks as sound's a bell,
 Yet roars for axe and faggot ;
 The brain that's hot with fear of hell
 Will hatch this kind of maggot.

DENYS.

O thou pale knight

Of death, whose shroud like the crusader's cloak
 Is suffering's emblem ; thou whose sunken eyes
 Peer through thy latticed vizor on this earth,
 Whose sod thou sweetest with thy grave-clothes'
 hem ;

Out of what cave where death left thee half-gnawn
 Art thou arisen to stalk the wintry fields,
 The sheeted corpse of pestilence, a ghost,
 A spirit and a spectre ? With thy hand
 Thou ringest the faint knell of coming death,
 Sorrow begot thee and thy name is woe.

LEPER. God save thee, master, and give thee a merry Christmas.

DENYS. How dreadful are the accents of disease
Through the corrupted pipes of throat and nose,
With horrid mockery of harmonious speech,
Whistling untunably. Now, had I faith
To put it to the touch ; kiss the scarred flesh
Behind that tainted robe, and pour the balm
Of brotherhood and pity in his ear ;
Tell him of happiness eternal : love
Divine, that maketh largest recompense.
Take thou my garment, friend : give me thy cloak,
For in God's sight I am fouler far than thou.
Look how I cast my slough and fling away
Earth's raiment for a vesture wove in Heaven,
The white and vestal garment of the grave.

[They exchange clothes.]

LEPER. What, Loony, wilt thou take my clapper too ?
That makes thee one of us. Come, sit thee down ;
I'll teach thee to snare larks. Soft ; thou must hide
Behind this bush, and when the birds come—
hop !—

' Buzz ' goes the string, and—tweedle-deedle-dee.
I hope that won't o'ertax thy pretty wits ;
Forsooth, it is a gentle occupation
And most melodious food. 'Twill make thee sing
As sweet as any angel up in Heaven.

DENYS. Hush, friend ! God grant that we may join
our songs

Before the Throne, and of His mercy save
My feet and thine, and those I once ensnared,
From gins far worse than these. I am not mad ;
Dost thou not know me, friend ?

LEPER. I know thee well :
Thou'rt Denys : him that all the maids were mad
To kiss—

DENYS. Forbear ! Oh, madness most accursed !
And I the sinful cause.

LEPER. Content you, sir,
That garment is love-proof. Thou'lt stay with me ?

DENYS. I may not stay. Dost thou not know the
graves

Are open wide ? Dost thou not know the Judge
Appareth in the heavens ? Oh, tarry, Lord !
Grant but one short hour to my weariness,
Let them not die in sin ! The Bridegroom comes !
I will not go unto the marriage feast
Without a wedding garment. Wrap me close,
Simon of Bethany ! With these grave-clothes,
Surely the very dead will hear me ! On !

[*Exit.*

LEPER. I thank Thee, Lord, that makest the sun to
shine

Upon the just and unjust. Chastellux,
Here's proof less fallible than Joseph's coat,
And worth a little gold. I'll to the castle
And vend my news.

[*Exit, singing.*

Throw the dust upon my feet,
Wrap me in my winding sheet,
Dig for me a lonely grave,
Such as damned self-murderers have.
Send me forth with sound of bell
In the fenny fields to dwell.
There, when forest ways are dark
And the village watchdogs bark,

With my dim horn lantern lit
Like a death's-head moth I'll flit,
And my wooden clapper's tongue
Rattle like a gibbet hung
With a felon's bones in chains ;
Till the woodman in the lanes
Plodding o'er the frozen ground
Shall stumble at the fearful sound.
Very silent, very slow,
In my long white robe I go,
Up and down, and to and fro
With my mask of linen, where,
Like two caged hyænas, glare
Famished eyes in twilight dun ;
How the little children run !
I am merry when they scream.
Sometimes in a noonday dream,
Crouched upon some shady rock,
Croaking ravens round me flock,
Paying me the compliment
Of their too sagacious scent.
But they dare not flesh their beaks ;
Loud my merry clapper speaks,
Then 'tis sport to see them fly.
At the rich man's gate I lie ;
He may turn me from his doors,
Curs and mongrels lick my sores.
But a sweeter pleasure than
Hounds' caress or human ban,
Raven's croak or clapper's tongue,
Psalm for living corpses sung,
Children's shriek or lovers' fright,
Startled on a moonless night,
Tolling bell or hut of reed,

Whose chill damp the fen-fires feed,
Is to dream I lie asleep
In my warm grave wide and deep,
And Goodman Death with his mattock-men
Comes and digs me up again.

SCENE V

Thorny brakes along the lower reaches of the river ; the towers and spires of the city are nearer than before ; the broken bridge can be faintly discerned. It is late afternoon. DENYS alone.

DENYS. Ye whispering fiends of doubt torment me not !
On ! On ! Ye legioned armies of the air,
I mock your taunts, your battle I defy,
Though on each blast a hostile demon rides
And shakes a javelin at my quaking heart.
Was Lazarus raised ? Answer me that, false fiends.
Ah, God ! these thorns !

[He rushes on, tearing his way through the bushes.]

SCENE VI

An open place near the broken bridge. Workmen are bringing in their tools to break down the old foundations and prepare for the ceremony of laying the new. Citizens begin to assemble.

Enter ORME and BASKERVILLE.

BASK. *(to the workmen as they break ground)*. Remember the flask, I pray you. Feelingly ; feelingly.

1st WORKMAN. The devil take the flask ; give me a
pot of gold.

2nd WORKMAN. Ah, but the good red wine ! Why, I
do feel

As 'twere a bitterness in me for want
Of a kind cup to sweeten angry blood.

3rd WORKMAN. Ye are two fools to talk of gold and
wine.

We that were prodigal in plenty, lack
In these lean times the scraps we threw to dogs
When we were fat and prosperous. Savagely,
Savagely ; let the day bring what it will.

[They set to work in sullen anger.]

ORME. When grapes were fat and cans were full
And there was store of wine and wool,
Even at the board with riches loaded
The feasting mind a fast foreboded.
Whatever pleasure man pursues
In tavern, gaming-hell or stews,
The law, there's no escaping from it,
Is first a surfeit then a vomit.
Oh, 'tis a pleasant thing to range
The merry chimes of chance and change ;
One sees how progress is divine
When they turn wolves who once were swine.
And yet in loss of flesh I trace
Sure evidence of growth in grace.
The butterfly that sips the dew
Will dine upon the dunghill too ;
It only needs a little tact,
The sweet from bitter to extract,
And like the wind with jolly breath,
Whistle a jig through the jaws of death

For everything that comes to birth
 Is matter for the wise man's mirth :
 Even death, your grinning skulls protest,
 Is nothing but life's crowning jest.

[He produces a bottle of wine.]

Come cap of fur and coat of frieze,
 Lay by your silk apparel,
 The old year's wine is on the lees,
 And we must tilt the barrel.

[Drinks.]

The squirrel's left the beechen mast,
 The fieldmouse quit the stubble,
 And like a beggar in the blast
 Comes winter bent and double.

[Drinks and hands the flask to BASKERVILLE.]

THE CROWD (*as if shouting a familiar chorus*).

Then buffet him and cuff at him,
 Admonish him with stones,
 And make a better man of him
 By breaking all his bones.

BASK. (*half drunk*).

In hollow lanes I whistle clear
 As any schoolboy merry.
 I pluck the leaf that's thin and sere,
 I spare the scarlet berry.

CROWD. Then buffet him, etc.

ORME. Art thou the thief of gipsy kind
 The year's late buds that pinches
 And blasts them with a freezing wind
 Until they die by inches ?

BASK. These little foundlings of the fall
 On autumn's bounty fathered,

Since death awaits us one and all,

Why should they not be gathered ?

CROWD (*beating him*).

Then buffet him, etc.

ORME. Hunger hath taken my advice

And so forsooth shall avarice.

Now for a penny I would shift that stone

And see what lurks behind it.

BASK.

A parlous thing

Unless the Church were by—soul's jeopardy.

A little Roman devil sits in there

Like toad imprisoned in unquarried stone.

Can'st thou speak Latin ?

A WORKMAN.

Go, friend, fetch a stoup

Of holy water : we will dig him out

And you shall hear him squeak when we baptize
him.

ORME. Permit a prudent friend to ask

If you have quite forgot the flask :

When holy water can't be had

Strong drink will hearten good and bad.

[*They all drink.*]

Wine never harmed the jovial god of thunder,

'Twas intellect that burst his brow asunder.

Would ye be rich as well as wise,

Unlock the hoarded gold that lies

Beneath these stones ; the yellow slave

That Solomon his glory gave,

And even to this age survives

To purchase concubines and wives ?

Why then, with me in chorus sing

Before we touch the accursed thing.

Death rides a pale horse ; he respecteth no bounds ;

And who hath outstripped the speed of his hounds ?
 The run may be long or the run may be short,
 But winter or summer there's sure to be sport.
 For where is the fox that can baffle his skill ?
 If Death hunt the pack they are sure of a kill.
 Then wrangle and mangle each dog for a bone,
 Dropsy, sciatica, gravel and stone :
 Show your teeth if you will ; snarl, whimper or
 snap ;

But Death rides away with the brush in his cap.

BASK. I like not this hunting song ; it smells of the
 grave.

ORME. A little earthy or so ; but what would you ?
 'Tis buried treasure we seek.

Tush, man, convertible coin,

Ingle-nooks and ale-house benches,

Merry wives and willing wenches.

Virtue ? Here is the only virtue that endures. The
 gods use it not, and yet it makes men gods. Man
 may serve his generation : here is that which
 serveth each in turn. Heaven's jealousy hid it in
 the earth : man's avarice dug it up again ; and
 the devil teaches him how to use it.

A friend to love, a friend to hate,

To want and care a foe, sir !

It furnished Pharaoh's royal state,

And Nabuchodonosor.

*[The workmen with pick and crowbar turn up the skeleton
 of a child, buried for superstitious reasons under
 the old bridge.]*

ORME. What ? Not an obol ? Now, by holy Paul
 These Romans loved a jest.

[The workmen throw down their tools in anger.]

1st WORKMAN. The devil take thee.

2nd WORKMAN. Thou trumpery thing, I'll crush thee
like a wasp.

1st WORKMAN. He ever laid about him with a whip
When most he seemed to jest.

3rd WORKMAN. When we are pinched
With nothing in our bellies but the wind,
Is he to have his mock and jibe? Lay on!

ORME. Nay, would you play at touch with me touch
yonder!

*[He points to the figure of DENYS looking down on them
from the parapet of the bridge, his pale face un-
covered now above his leper's dress. Exit ORME.]*

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Denys!

OTHER VOICES. A leper! God has punished him!

OTHERS. God hath delivered him to our vengeance!

DENYS. Off,
Thou clinging death! I am Denys l'Auxerrois!

[He flings off his leper's dress.]

THE CROWD. Kill! Kill!

*[The crowd swarms up the steps but are checked by the
boldness of IMOGEN, PETRONILLA, FRANCES,
BLANCHE and others of DENYS' partisans, who press
forward from the now considerable crowd.]*

PET. Back, back!

OTHERS. Close round him!

PET. Take away their weapons.
Or if 'tis killing, not one man alone
But make a general slaughter.

[The hostile crowd hesitates.]

DENYS. Not yet, not yet: not bludgeoned like a beast
And beaten to a pulp this butcher's way

With battered brains ! Who said that death was
naught ?

What lying record feigns that through death's bars
The further glory beckons? Ye are men
And therefore ye must die.

THE CROWD. Thou shalt die first !

DENYS. As ye are men, oh, be compassionate !

THE CROWD. Ask God for mercy.

DENYS. God ! God's love, God's mercy,
Who freezes the starved bird and blights the flower,
And left half finished this unstable world
That He might rock proud cities, holy temples
Raised to His name, and crush beneath the stones
Faces of terror turned to Him for pity ;
Yea, sacrifice to the most monstrous deep
His children ! Are ye gods that know not pity,
Or beasts ? What fiercer madness shakes ye now,
Tossing your Mænad locks for viperous death ?
Ye have drunk blood, and your red eyeballs roll
Through blood-tinged smoke. Would death had
found us then

'Mid purple plunder of the bronze-leaved vine,
Or with those ebon juices surfeited
That steep the soul in sleep ; and we were laid
Like careless drunkards with our wreaths awry
Under the sunlit grass.

ONE OF THE CROWD. There's blood upon his face!
Blood! Blood!

DENYS. Come with swift strides then. Oh, if I had a
weapon

I would do this for a sick dog. But now
I that was sick and mad am sane and sound,
Troubled no more with dreams of heaven and hell.
I that cried out for pity and to drink

Death as a loving cup, yea, fall on death
As from love's arms with sated appetite
And with the drowsy surfeit sink to sleep,
Feel all my parts as members uncreate,
Excelling mortal mettle, and my soul
A king, that bears on high so proud a crest
Ye strike at me in vain !

THE CROWD. Strike ! Strike him down !
Remember Angell's son ! Remember Doris !

[*They close upon him and beat him down. As he falls, AUXERRE, the BISHOP and PHILIP with his mounted men-at-arms surge forward, drive back the mob and gather round the body.*]

SOME OF THE MOB. Oh, horror !

Aux. Get you back, you clumsy fools !
Look, look, what lubber's work !

[HERMES and ARIANE *breathless with haste force their way to the body.*

AR. Oh, Denys, Denys !
My god, my love, my boy ! Oh, ruffian Death !
The sea that might have tossed thee to the shore
Had less defaced thee !

Aux. This is the cruellest work
Murder ere wrought. If I could purchase back
His breath with blood of them that butchered him
I'd slaughter ye like sheep !

AR. Oh, God, God, God !
O world where I must sit and weep alone !

Aux. And let it be remembered I who banned him
Loved him at heart, and hung my soul with black
In sorrow for his death.

HER. He feared to die,
But now he's passed beyond the gates of fear.

AUX. O Philip, Philip !

PHIL. Good, my lord, my soul
That passion dyed so bloody and so dark
Grows pale at this. In sorrow sheathe your swords ;
The boon we would have given him is his.

[He dismounts.]

AUX. Come hither, daughter ; weep upon my breast ;
Thou must not shed those bitter inward tears
That bleed the soul to death. And these events
Let death interpret, speak the epilogue :
For we that are the actors mar our parts
And miss the purport.

HER. Thou poor bruised flesh,
I'll hide thee reverently in hallowed earth.
Let no man judge him ; they that loved him weep
And they that hated bury their hate in's grave.

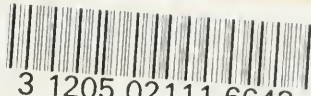
AUX. O Life, he would have spelled some syllable
Of meaning in thee, but the light failed, the page
Grew dark.

[The scene closes.]

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